

**July 7, 2017**

## **Air New Zealand touches down for 2017 season**

The first 2017 non-stop Auckland – Sunshine Coast Air New Zealand flight touched down this morning at Sunshine Coast Airport, bringing the first of thousands of visitors for the season from across the Tasman.

In its sixth year of operation, services will be available to and from the Sunshine Coast up to four times per week from today through until October 29, 2017.

Sunshine Coast Council Tourism, Sports & Major Events Portfolio Councillor Jason O'Pray said the ongoing commitment by Air New Zealand and trans-Tasman alliance partner Virgin Australia had helped build the Sunshine Coast as a favourite destination for Kiwi visitors.

"Our visitor numbers from New Zealand continue to grow each year and this is in no small part due to the direct flights available between Auckland and the Sunshine Coast," Cr O'Pray said.

"It is wonderful to see so many New Zealanders making the Sunshine Coast part of their annual winter getaway."

Welcoming the first passengers this morning, Sunshine Coast Airport General Manager Peter Pallot said the Air New Zealand flights broadened travel horizons for New Zealand residents and Sunshine Coast locals alike.

"The flights provide easy access for our New Zealand passengers, allowing them to begin their Sunshine Coast escape the moment they step off the plane," Mr Pallot said

"The services also provide hassle-free international travel for our residents, giving them the opportunity to explore all that New Zealand has to offer, or to take advantage of easy connections to a range of Air New Zealand international destinations including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver and beyond."

Visit Sunshine Coast CEO Simon Latchford said the regional tourism organisation's investment in New Zealand was really paying off

"We are the only Queensland RTO with a representative in Auckland and that presence is allowing us to focus strongly on driving visitation from our number one international market," Mr Latchford said.

“Our recent Sunshine by Lunchtime campaign with Air New Zealand and Tourism Events Queensland was timed specifically to be in market in the chilly month of May and increase sales in the lead up to the flight services commencing today.

“The short direct flight is the perfect avenue for a holiday break to warm up our Kiwi friends and encourage them to enjoy the diversity of experiences, events, food and wine available on the Sunshine Coast.”

A total of 66,000 New Zealanders visited the Sunshine Coast in the year ending March 2017, a 5.5% increase on the previous year.

New Zealand is the number one international visitor market for the Sunshine Coast.

## **ENDS**

### **Fast Facts:**

- Air New Zealand Sunshine Coast – Auckland direct flights began in 2012
- More than 13,500 passengers travelled on the winter services in 2016, a 12% increase on 2015
- Flights operate between 7 July – 29 October 2017
- Friday and Sunday flights are available throughout the season
- Wednesday flights are available from 12 July to 18 October with additional Monday flights available from 10 to 24 July and 25 September to 9 October 2017

### **Media requests:**

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#### **Air New Zealand**

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