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MEDIA RELEASE

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA AND NEWCASTLE AIRPORT ANNOUNCE DIRECT INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO AUCKLAND

Virgin Australia to become the first airline to operate Trans-Tasman flights from Newcastle Airport in 16 years

Virgin Australia, Newcastle Airport and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Michael McCormack MP, today announced that for the first time in 16 years, travellers will be able to fly directly between Newcastle and Auckland, opening up a range of travel and tourism opportunities.

The new flights will make Virgin Australia the first airline to provide an international service from the upgraded Newcastle Airport terminal.

Virgin Australia will operate three return services per week during the peak holiday period from 22 November 2018 to 17 February 2019, creating a gateway to the rest of New Zealand as well as the Greater Hunter Region.

Mr McCormack said Newcastle Airport is a major gateway into New South Wales and now plays an important role in global connectivity by facilitating travel and tourism opportunities between Australia and New Zealand.

"Importantly, these flights will help drive regional tourism growth and dispersal of visitors to Australia's most popular tourism destinations," Mr McCormack said.

"New Zealand and Australia remain strong reciprocal tourism markets, with some 2.845 million travellers* moving between the two destinations each year.

"Virgin Australia will be providing 13,000 additional seats across the busy holiday season," Mr McCormack added.

Virgin Australia General Manager, Network, Revenue and Alliances, Russell Shaw, said, "Virgin Australia is proud to provide the regional New South Wales community with increased travel choices and convenience, and a much more seamless international travel experience.

"With this direct flight, local residents will arrive in Auckland within three hours, ensuring they have more time to enjoy the breath-taking sights and incredible experiences New Zealand is famous for.

"The Greater Hunter Region will also benefit from increased tourism opportunities, with New Zealanders now able to travel direct to Newcastle and explore the region and all it has to offer including wineries, restaurants and the pristine beaches," Mr Shaw said.

Newcastle Airport CEO, Dr Peter Cock said, "Newcastle Airport is delighted to be working in partnership with Virgin Australia to provide our region with the international connectivity it deserves. Community support for direct international services has been extremely strong. New Zealand is our number one unserved market, so it is fitting that the first flight through our new international facilities will be servicing Auckland,

"This seasonal flight is a huge step forward in becoming a second international gateway into NSW. We express our gratitude to our shareholders and local, state and federal government stakeholders for supporting our vision to deliver the Airport the region deserves," Dr Cock added.



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The new flights between Newcastle and Auckland are on sale now at www.virginaustralia.com for AUD\$199 one-way, excluding checked baggage.¹

Virgin Australia Newcastle to Auckland Schedule (effective 22 November)²

Route	Flight Number	Dep/Arr	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
AKL-NTL	VA198	1710/1845		✈		✈			✈
NTL-AKL	VA199	1930/0025		✈		✈			✈

ENDS

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¹Flights are subject to regulatory approvals. On sale from 2pm AEST 18 July 2018 until midnight AEST 19 July 2018 unless sold out prior. For travel from 22 November 2018 to 11 December 2018 and 29 January 2019 to 17 February 2019. Subject to availability. Seats are limited and may not be available at peak times or on all flights. Price is based on a one way Go fare booked on the internet. Price may vary until ticketed. Add \$40 for bookings made on the phone or at the airport. **Checked baggage is not included in this fare.** Return fare may vary with the addition of local taxes and charges or due to currency fluctuations. All payments made on the internet, on the phone or at the airport via debit/credit card are subject to a payment surcharge between 0.6% to 1.3% of the total value of the card transaction (capped at \$70 per passenger per booking). Changes and cancellations incur a fee and any applicable fare difference, see www.virginaustralia.com/au/en/plan/fees-surcharges/trans-tasman/ for details. Name changes are not permitted. Refunds are not permitted under your fare rules but you may be entitled to a refund under the Australian Consumer Law in certain circumstances. Check your fare rules for more information. Some flights may be operated by a partner airline. Different baggage allowances and conditions may apply to these flights. **Full terms and conditions at www.virginaustralia.com**

² Flights are subject to regulatory approvals.

*Source: Tourism Australia and Tourism New Zealand (up to May 2018)



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Notes for the Editor:

Newcastle Airport <https://www.newcastleairport.com.au/>

Newcastle Airport Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/ntlairport/>

Newcastle Airport Twitter Feed: <https://twitter.com/NTLairport>

Virgin Australia: <https://www.virginaustralia.com/>

Virgin Australia Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/virginaustralia>

Virgin Australia Twitter Feed: <https://twitter.com/virginaustralia>

About Virgin Australia flights servicing Newcastle and Auckland effective as of 22 November 2018:

- > 13-week seasonal service
- > 3 flights per week: Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday
- > First flight: Thursday 22 November 2018
- > Last flight: Sunday 17 February 2019
- > Flight times:
 - o Depart AKL 5.10 pm / Arrive NTL 6.45 pm
 - o Depart NTL 7.30 pm / Arrive AKL 12.25 am
- > Flight duration: 3 hours and 35 minutes
- > Aircraft type: Boeing B737-800 (seating 176 passengers)
- > Total number of seats during the season: 13,376
- > Regional economic benefit: estimated net benefit of up to \$6 million, \$3.1million in direct tourism spend, additional 58 jobs created in local community to support service
- > Freedom Air briefly operated flights between Newcastle and Auckland in 2001 before ceasing the following year
- > No other carrier has operated a service to a destination outside of Australia since 2002 (service between Newcastle and Norfolk Island operated in 2007).



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Frequently Asked Questions

1. When will the first flight to Auckland be?

Thursday, 22 November 2018

2. How often will there be flights to Auckland?

Flights to Auckland will operate from Newcastle three times per week, effective 22 November.

AKL-NTL	VA198	1710/1845		✈		✈			✈
NTL-AKL	VA199	1930/0025		✈		✈			✈

3. How long will the flight take?

Three and a half hours.

4. What will the fares be?

Virgin Australia has launched fares from only \$199 each way; there is a range of different fares available to suit all travellers' needs, flexibility and budgets.

5. When are tickets on sale?

2.00pm today, Wednesday 18 July 2018.

6. Why should I visit Auckland? What is there to do there?

Auckland is the perfect short break destination, with incredible natural wonders on the doorstep of a world-class city. It offers something for everyone and caters as much for family holidays as it does for romantic getaways.

- The Bay of Islands and Waiheke Island offers stunning beaches
- There's bungee jumping and canyoning or sailing on the Waitemata Harbour for the adventurous
- Dormant volcanoes for hiking
- A great food and wine scene as well as a number of markets such as La Cigale for fresh local produce
- Maori heritage walks to explore the city's history
- Lastly, there is also Hobbiton, the film set used in the Lord of the Rings movies!

7. Is this a permanent route?

No, this is a seasonal route for 13 weeks over the summer period, 22 November 2018 – 17 February 2019.

8. What is a seasonal route?

A seasonal route operates for a specific amount of time to cater to market needs. The airline commits to the delivery of the service for this period and, if deemed commercially viable by the airline, the service is often repeated annually. Other examples of seasonal flights include Sydney to Vancouver, Melbourne to Vancouver, Perth to Christchurch, Seoul to Cairns, Melbourne to Osaka.



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9. Why is Auckland only a seasonal route?

The 13 week service between Newcastle and Auckland is being offered across the peak holiday period of November – February. Like all new products, you need to test the market. If demand is strong, there is a case for Newcastle Airport and Virgin Australia to discuss the feasibility of the route becoming a year round service. For this to happen though, we need the support of our community and region. We need travellers to support the service by going smarter from their local Airport.

10. What happens if I book a ticket to Auckland on 17 February but want to fly back to Newcastle after the season has ended?

You would need to book a non-direct flight home.

11. Will this become a permanent route?

It is up to Virgin Australia to decide this. However, if it is commercially viable and there is ongoing demand, there is a chance this could become permanent. Virgin Australia has recognised a need for direct flights to Auckland from the Hunter region and will continue to assess ongoing demand and viability for the route. You can help by always travelling to and from Newcastle when possible. Demonstrated demand helps to show airlines the scale of opportunity.

12. What type of plane will fly this route?

Boeing 737-800, seating 176 passengers

13. Do I have a choice of classes on-board?

Yes. Virgin offers economy and business classes.

14. Is there in-flight service?

Yes, in-flight-service is provided in some ticket prices.

15. How much luggage can I take?

Passengers should check this with Virgin Australia prior to flying.

16. Can I make group bookings?

Yes, please contact Virgin directly for group bookings.

17. What is the airline safety rating?

Virgin Australia are the operator of the aircraft and operate under a CASA approved Regular Passenger Transport Air Operators Certificate with full CASA approved Carriers Liability Insurance.

18. Why has it taken so long to get international flights?

Airlines decide on new routes based on market demand and commercial viability. Whilst Newcastle Airport works hard and proactively pitches new routes to airlines, it is up to the airlines to decide the routes for their aircraft. Securing new routes – both international and domestic – is a complex and competitive process. Ultimately, airlines decide where they fly their planes, and that decision is based on demand and driving return on these valuable assets.

19. When will we get the next international routes from Newcastle?

Airlines will be watching to assess the success for this new international route.

We hope that with the people of the Hunter using this new route, other airlines will favourably view the market and will in turn, provide other opportunities for the region. Demonstrated demand helps to show airlines the scale of opportunity. You can help by always travelling to and from Newcastle when possible. Choose Newcastle Airport as your point A when you travel whether it be domestic, direct to New Zealand or hubbing international through Brisbane or Melbourne. We need you to show the airlines that we want to go smarter and fly from our local airport.



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We have a great video, which shows how to attract more flights from airlines:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RxveyanbiA>

20. Are you trying to secure other international destinations?

Absolutely! Our Auckland seasonal route is a big step for us and we are excited about future opportunities. The Airport is working with a number of airport partners on business cases for additional services and new destinations routes.

21. What other destinations are you working on?

Domestically, we have listened to your comments and have focused on new services into South Australia. We continue to work on additional destinations into Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. Internationally our focus is on other short-haul international destinations similar to New Zealand, such as the Pacific Islands and Indonesia.