



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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### **Brisbane secures first flight from China's capital – Whitsundays benefit!**

Brisbane has secured its first direct flights from the Chinese capital with Air China to fly four times a week from Beijing, injecting more than \$191 million into the Queensland economy.

Tourism and Major Events Minister Kate Jones said nearly 170,000 passengers would arrive in Queensland over the next four years.

"Securing flights from China's capital city for the first time is a big coup for Queensland, opening up new opportunities to tap into this valuable market," Ms Jones said.

"This also enables Chinese tourists to choose Brisbane as their entry point to Australia whilst also providing easy access to many of our other destinations in Queensland, which deliver on the quintessential Australian lifestyle experience, a major drawcard for Chinese travellers.

"From our modern capital city, aquatic, coastal and wildlife experiences of the Gold Coast to the pristine Island getaways and awe-inspiring Great Barrier Reef in the Whitsundays, Queensland offers something for everyone.

"China is Queensland's largest international market, generating almost a fifth of Queensland's total tourism expenditure, with visitors spending \$1 billion over the past year.

"We could not have secured these flights without our valuable partners including Tourism and Events Queensland, Brisbane Airport Corporation, Gold Coast Tourism, Brisbane Marketing, Tourism Whitsundays and Tourism Australia."

Tourism Whitsundays' CEO Craig Turner said the Whitsundays had seen strong growth out of China in the past few years and the new flights from Beijing with Air China were a significant opportunity for the region.

"Visitation from China was up 21.9 per cent for the Whitsundays in the year ending June 30, 2017, and our commitment to the consortium underlines our focus on offering the Chinese market a premium Great Barrier Reef experience," Mr Turner said.

"Around 44 per cent of all visits to the Great Barrier Reef took place in the Whitsundays last year and we are committed to providing Chinese visitors with that amazing experience, as well as world famous Heart Reef, which can only be seen in the Whitsundays, and the iconic Whitehaven Beach."

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Steven Ciobo, said it was great to see the new flights announced during the China-Australia Year of Tourism.

“China remains Australia’s most valuable tourism market with visitors spending almost \$10 billion across Australia in the last year,” Mr Ciobo said.

“With the potential to be worth up to \$13 billion by the year 2020, it is crucial that Australia continues to strengthen its ties with China to help realise the full potential of this market.”

Air China vice president Wang Mingyuan said the Beijing – Brisbane direct service was the first scheduled service operated by Air China to Queensland as well as the first service from Greater Northern China to Queensland.

“Up until now, Air China has launched direct flights from Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu to other destinations in Australia - more than 30 flights every week between China and Australia,” Mr Wang said.

“After the launch of the Beijing - Brisbane service, Air China will provide more flexible choices for people from China to travel to Australia.

“In addition, by taking advantage of Star Alliance’s strong airline networks, passengers can travel to more destinations through its counterparts in Star Alliance.”

Brisbane Airport Corporation CEO and Managing Director Julieanne Alroe congratulated the consortium for securing the flights.

“This is another exceptional result for the ‘Connecting with Asia’ Consortium all of whom are working tirelessly in this space to attract new airlines such as Air China to our city and secure new direct and additional services or capacity on existing routes,” Ms Alroe said.

“These services are crucial for growing and supporting Queensland’s important tourism, trade, business and education industry sectors, while making our city and state a prime gateway for Chinese visitors and removing the need for Queensland travellers to transit via other ports.”

Lord Mayor Graham Quirk said securing new direct flights from one of China’s largest markets would provide a boost to tourism and local jobs.

“Brisbane has an increasing amount of leisure and lifestyle opportunities and we look forward to Chinese visitors enjoying everything we have to offer – including our clean and green outdoors, shopping, dining, galleries and hotels,” Cr Quirk said.

“The new Air China flights will also provide more investment and business opportunities and attract more international students, continuing to boost our economy, create more jobs and further position Brisbane as a New World City.”

Gold Coast Tourism CEO Martin Winter said the landmark deal will provide the Gold Coast with further opportunities to enhance the city’s profile among Chinese consumers.

“Beijing and the broader Northern China catchment represent a significant proportion of current Chinese visitation to Australia. Securing direct air service from Beijing is a crucial

step forward for Queensland, given it has been the missing link for access to the destination from the burgeoning China market,” Mr Winter said.

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