

MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release
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Qantas announces daily return flights Brisbane-Whitsundays

It has been over two decades since Whitsunday Coast Airport (WCA) welcomed the flying kangaroo but that is set to change with Qantas today announcing daily return flights between the Whitsundays and Brisbane.

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Andrew Willcox said it had been a dream of his to lure the flying kangaroo back to WCA and offer more choice for the corporate and premium leisure market.

"WCA is stamping itself as one of the fastest growing regional airports in Australia and these new flights will be launched in time for the September school holidays creating an extra 50,000 plus seats annually.

"The business and tourism sector has done it tough during the Covid-19 pandemic so it is great to see that our Council owned airport is leading from the front to support our region's recovery," he said.

"It is fantastic to be able to welcome our national carrier Qantas to the Whitsunday Coast Airport and the new deal puts us on target to smash the 500,000 annual passenger number record barrier.

"I am grateful for the support of our airline partners who continue to show confidence in the ability of our region to be one of Australia's peak domestic tourism destinations.

"A lot of networking and collaboration has gone on behind the scenes to seal this new deal and our airport team continue to kick goals and build key industry relationships," Mayor Willcox said.

"Ease of connectivity between our three eastern seaboard capital cities is so important to deliver increasing visitors numbers into the region."

Qantaslink CEO John Gissing said with international borders still largely closed, Qantas are pleased to be making it easier for Australians to experience the world-famous beaches of The Whitsundays Region and access to the Great Barrier Reef.

"COVID has also meant we've seen demand for travel within the Sunshine State soar in the past year," he said.

"Our flights from Brisbane to places such as Cairns and Townsville have been incredibly popular so we expect this new route to Whitsunday Coast Airport will appeal to the many Queenslanders looking to holiday in their own state.

"These new flights also open up The Whitsundays Region to Qantas customers across the country who will be able to seamlessly connect through Brisbane from our extensive domestic network.

"More visitors will be great for the economy with flow-on benefits for local businesses in their recovery from the impact of COVID," Mr Gissing said.

"We'll be promoting these new flights and The Whitsundays to millions of our frequent flyers across the country, offering travellers complimentary food and drinks, baggage and lounge access for eligible passengers in Brisbane Airport."

Whitsunday Coast Airport Chief Operating Officer Craig Turner said he was elated to be partnering with Qantas and the new deal was a boost for the tourism sector.

"With the addition of Qantas to our flight schedule The Whitsundays brand continues its transformation from a simple backpacker experience to be a premium tourism destination for couples and families.

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"Tourism, agriculture and mining are the three economic pillars of our region and each will benefit greatly from these new daily return flights with improved connectivity.

"This is a significant deal and will help increase capacity by over 30% on our 2019 numbers which to date, is our highest year on record," he said.

"We will continue to build relationships with all our airline partners and the community can be confident that Whitsunday Coast Airport will continue to work with all brands to further increase capacity."

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Tash Wheeler praised Council and the Whitsunday Coast Airport team for securing the exciting deal with Qantas.

"The announcement of Qantas flights from Brisbane to Whitsunday Coast Airport is a fantastic win for the Whitsundays and showcases that our collaborative marketing efforts are cutting through domestically and driving visitation to the region.

"The new 50,000 plus seats annually with Qantas reinforces that the Whitsundays is one of the most sought-after domestic holiday destinations and we can't wait to welcome more visitors to the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef," Ms Wheeler said.

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About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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