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## Media release

### Newcastle Airport goes international with history-making Virgin Australia flights

Thursday 22 November 2018

Today marked a historic milestone for the greater Hunter Region as Newcastle Airport becomes NSW's second international airport, when the first flights servicing Auckland in 16 years landed at the Airport.

Newcastle Airport and Virgin Australia celebrated the occasion with the official opening of the new international gates welcoming the first passengers into the \$1.6 million international processing facilities for the first time.

The inaugural inbound flight from Auckland arrived at Newcastle Airport at 8.50pm to an excited crowd of family, friends and media cameras.

Newcastle Airport CEO, Dr Peter Cock described the arrival of the inaugural flight as a major milestone for the Hunter, Central Coast and Northern NSW, establishing direct connections as a true global gateway.

The much-anticipated service operated by Virgin Australia between Auckland and Newcastle marks the start of the airlines' three direct international services per week, estimated to generate an additional \$6.1 million into the local economy and up to 6,500 extra visitors to the region.

Passengers on-board the Boeing 737-800 from Auckland were welcomed in true Hunter-style as local media, tourism, industry and government stakeholders gathered to see the plane touch down on the runway.

Guests arriving from Auckland included Port Stephens Council Mayor Ryan Palmer, Newcastle Airport Chair Mr. Peter Gesling, media and trade from New Zealand, and excited V8 Supercar fans taking advantage of the direct flight straight to the starting line of the Newcastle 500 this weekend.

An engineering technicality forced an extended delay on the return flight and it is now scheduled to depart Newcastle Airport at 12:15pm on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018.

The 13-week seasonal service will operate over the peak holiday period with direct flights available every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday between 22 November 2018 – 17 February 2019.

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



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**Quote attributable to Virgin Australia**

**General Manager, Network, Revenue and Alliances, Russell Shaw**

Virgin Australia General Manager, Network, Revenue and Alliances, Russell Shaw, said, 'We are thrilled to be the first airline to launch flights between Auckland and Newcastle in 16 years and connect these two fantastic cities together again. The new service will provide the regional New South Wales community with a faster, more convenient way to travel between Newcastle and Auckland giving them more time to spend exploring all that New Zealand has to offer. We've recently introduced a suite of changes on flights to New Zealand and are pleased to be offering an all-inclusive service on the new flights including a meal, drink, baggage, inflight entertainment and access to WiFi,' Mr Shaw said.

**Quote attributable to Newcastle Airport Shareholder, Port Stephens Council  
Mayor Ryan Palmer**

"Today marks the start of a new era for our region, as we welcome our first international flight from Auckland to Newcastle. It is also another key step in the ongoing expansion of our airport and its strategic importance to the Hunter. As Mayor of Port Stephens, I am very proud to have been a part of history and very excited to see our region shared with our closest neighbours over the Tasman. International flights coming to Newcastle Airport is great news for people of the Hunter and regional NSW more broadly – opening up a new world of opportunities for residents and visitors alike."

**Quote attributable to Newcastle Airport Shareholder, City of Newcastle**

**Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes**

"The City of Newcastle is today hailing this major milestone in international tourism and business for our region," Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said. "What better time to welcome the City's first Trans-Tasman visitors by air - and those returning home to Newcastle - than just ahead of the city's biggest event, the Newcastle 500, which will once again draw significant interest from vast international and local audiences. "It's great to know that our City's international status will only grow among our Kiwi neighbours over coming months as Virgin Australia and other air carriers consider additional international routes to and from Newcastle."

**Quote attributable to Newcastle Airport**

**CEO, Dr Peter Cock**

Newcastle Airport CEO, Dr Peter Cock described the inaugural flights as a significant achievement for the Hunter region Central Coast and northern NSW, establishing direct connections as a true global gateway. "This is truly a historic moment that opens up a new era of travel and international connectivity for Northern NSW. We were very excited to welcome the arrival of VA199 this evening and the innumerable benefits the 13-week seasonal service will bring to the local economy. It is great for tourism, business, and for people visiting family and friends on both sides of the Tasman. Peter Cock added, "I would like to specifically recognise the support and cooperation of the Federal Government, NSW Government, Virgin Australia, Airport Shareholders City of Newcastle and Port Stephens Council, and the people of our local region in sharing our vision to deliver the Airport the region deserves. Without their help this new route, and all its broader benefits, would not be happening. For the first time in 16 years, the greater Hunter Region now has an international airport," said Peter Cock.

**Ends.**

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<http://www.newcastleairport.com.au/>



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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>

Newcastle Airport Master Plan: <https://www.newcastleairport.com.au/corporate/about/masterplan>

Astra Aerolab <https://astraerolab.com.au/>

#### **About Newcastle Airport**

- > Named 'Major Airport of the Year' at the 2018 Australian Airports Association Industry Awards.
- > Newcastle Airport is the second international gateway into New South Wales and the second busiest airport in the state.
- > Serviced by Jetstar, Virgin Australia, QantasLink, Regional Express, and FlyPelican to nine direct domestic destinations and onward to more than 65 worldwide destinations.
- > Direct international flights to Auckland New Zealand will operate 22 November 2018 - 17 February 2019. Operated by Virgin Australia, the 13-week seasonal service is the first international route in 16 years.
- > In March 2018, a direct service to Adelaide commenced operated by FlyPelican. Adelaide represents the first new major city route since the introduction of Gold coast in 2004.
- > FY17/18 passenger results saw Newcastle Airport break its all-time FY record with 1,272,634 travellers passing through the terminal.
- > The record throughput is a result of 25-month consecutive year-on-year monthly passenger growth recorded up until December 2017.
- > A record-breaking 4,823 passengers travelled through Newcastle Airport on Thursday 24 November (the day before Newcastle Supercars). The same weekend (Thurs-Mon), saw more than 21,000 through the Airport.
- > In February 2018, Newcastle Airport welcomed its 17 millionth passenger through the terminal since 1995. 2018 will see the 18 millionth passenger.
- > Newcastle Airport is the gateway to Australia's largest regional economy, with more than \$43 billion annual output and 48,500 businesses.
- > A significant economic driver, Newcastle Airport contributes more than \$1.1 billion to the state's economy each year. Of this, \$300 million is direct to the visitor economy, supporting 3,300 jobs.
- > Newcastle Airport is internationally ready, the international arrivals and departures fit-out completed in August 2017.
- > In its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, Newcastle Airport continues to work with its airline partners to increase the number of flights to our current destinations, to add direct flights to even more destinations, and to work tirelessly to secure more international destinations.
- > The more people that choose to fly from Newcastle Airport will provide evidence to the airlines that the demand truly exists and that our region deserves more.
- > On 22 March 2018, Newcastle Airport released its 60-year Master Plan, which includes a 20-year blueprint for growth, projections and business development of the Airport.
- > 30 minutes north of Newcastle, Newcastle Airport is located adjacent to RAAF Base Williamtown on land leased from Department of Defence.
- > Newcastle Airport Pty Ltd is jointly owned by City of Newcastle and Port Stephens Council and is governed by an independent, skills-based Board of Directors.