

Whitsunday Coast Airport lands new airline partner

In a coup for Whitsunday Coast Airport (WCA) a new airline partner, Alliance Airlines, will be the first to resume flights to the Whitsundays post COVID-19 pandemic shutdown.

Mayor Andrew Willcox said Alliance Airlines have agreed to commence return services Brisbane-WCA four times per week from June 22, utilising 100 and 80 seat Fokker jets.

“To attract a new airline partner as we start our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is a real boost for the tourism and business sectors in the Whitsundays.

“With the Premier lifting restrictions on travel within Queensland it is important that our airport resume services.

“With 1 in 3 jobs directly linked to tourism the Whitsundays is perfectly placed to lead domestic tourism recovery.

“We have a small population base but we are a large contributor in terms of the state’s tourism economy, accounting for 40 per cent of the \$6.3billion Great Barrier Reef industry for Queensland,” Mayor Willcox said.

“Over the last decade the tourism stakeholders in the Whitsundays have had to be a resilient mob but with a focus on domestic tourism for the next 12-18 months there is light at the end of the tunnel.

“Our airport was approaching 500,000 passengers annually prior to the pandemic so it is vital this key gateway to the Whitsundays is up and running as quickly as possible.”

The Palaszczuk Government will support the new flights to boost the region’s tourism industry which has been decimated by COVID-19.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said the deal was secured in partnership with Whitsunday Regional Council and there was an option to ramp up to daily flights if demand permits.

“We know how crucial the tourism industry is to the livelihoods of people in this region,” she said.

“We want to see more Queenslanders having a holiday in the Whitsundays. That’s what today’s announcement is all about.”

Tourism Minister Kate Jones said flights would return to the Whitsundays for the first time since 28 March.

Ms Jones said flights would generate more than \$9.2 million – bringing nearly 5300 tourists to the region

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over the next 12 months.

The Minister also revealed the flights would create more than 85 local jobs.

“We know that more tourists means more cash for local businesses,” Ms Jones said.

“This will pump millions of dollars into the local economy and support local jobs.”

Whitsunday Coast Airport Chief Operating Officer Aviation and Tourism, Craig Turner said it was important to be proactive with so many regions fighting for flights now restrictions are easing.

“These flights present the opportunity for WCA to develop a partnership with Alliance Airlines through this challenging period and beyond.

“The Whitsundays is a diverse region and the commitment of the Council to partner with a new carrier to find a solution for flights to resume should be applauded.

“Instead of sitting and waiting for the situation to change, Council has jumped on the front foot to negotiate a positive outcome for our community.

“Flights will be available for sale from June 3, with the first flight scheduled to land on June 22 in time for the school holidays.

“Alliance Airlines launch fares will start at \$99 one-way including taxes. All fares are inclusive of 20kg free checked baggage.

“In addition to the “now”, WCA and Council are committed to a long-term relationship with Alliance to boost future passenger numbers to the Whitsundays.”

Alliance Airlines CEO, Lee Schofield, said that Alliance Airlines was delighted to be partnering with Whitsunday Coast Airport to make these new flights a reality.

“We understand there are many essential services that are currently unable to access the Whitsundays and Alliance are proud to be able to be the first airline to recommence scheduled services to Whitsunday Coast Airport”

“With current travel restrictions easing we look forward to working with WCA to welcome many visitors to the Whitsunday region on our flights.

“Alliance Airlines are proud to be playing this important role in reawakening tourism in this beautiful part of Queensland.” Lee said.

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ASX-listed Alliance Airlines is a Queensland-based charter and scheduled airline operating over 40 aircraft across Australia.

In Queensland, Alliance Airlines currently maintains operational bases in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. Alongside a range of charter services across Queensland, Alliance also operates scheduled airline services between Brisbane, Bundaberg and Gladstone.

For more information or to book a flight, please visit: www.allianceairlines.com.au. Flights will also soon be available for sale through local and online travel agencies.

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