

Auckland Airport backs New Zealand tourism and trade following COVID-19

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Auckland Airport is supporting international calls to relax airport slot rules to help airlines protect their businesses through the COVID-19 outbreak with the confidence they can return to regular operations when market conditions improve.

Airlines fly around the world under World Slot Guidelines (WSG) – an 80/20 rule meaning carriers are required to meet at least 80% of their airport slots in order to retain them, or risk losing them.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has issued a world-wide request to governments and airport slot owners to provide alleviation to airlines around slot usage.

“We recognise these are exceptional circumstances that are testing the resilience of our industry,” says Scott Tasker, Auckland Airport’s General Manager Aeronautical Commercial.

“We stand alongside our airline partners. We support the relaxing of airport slot rules so airlines flying in and out of New Zealand have the ability to reduce flying during the impact of COVID-19, with the certainty they can re-establish services when the market improves.

“Tourism and trade are vitally important to New Zealand and the resilience of international air connectivity is a key part of that. We want all of the air services that fly routes to and from New Zealand to have the best chance of rebuilding once demand improves.”

The relaxing of slot rules will be considered by the Board of Slot Co-ordination NZ on Wednesday this week, an organisation made up of a group of airlines and airports, including Auckland Airport.

Auckland Airport has been working closely with its airport partners since the outbreak of COVID-19 and has introduced a range of support measures, particularly to help those businesses hardest hit.

“It’s a really challenging time for our industry and we are all feeling the impact.

“For the Auckland Airport community, there has been a significant reduction in the number of passengers coming through the terminals and a range of flight cancellations, which have a direct impact on all of the businesses that operate here, including all of Auckland Airport’s revenue streams.”

Mr Tasker says Auckland Airport is working with Tourism New Zealand, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) and other government partners to help sustain the tourism market and ensure there are robust plans in place to stimulate it once conditions improve.

“We welcome the Government’s decision to invest further in domestic and international tourism and we are already well underway in redirecting our activities to grow visitor-source markets such as Australia in order to support tourism into our country.

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“We’ve also been talking directly with airline managers based here and offshore to identify opportunities to keep existing import and export air cargo routes open during the COVID-19 outbreak.

“From an operational airport perspective, it’s been all hands to the pump right across the airport system. All of the organisations that make up the airport are working to support the Ministry of Health in protecting New Zealand against the spread of COVID-19,” Mr Tasker says.

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