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Kiwis to take flight

THE uncertainty surrounding the Victorian lockdown has "changed the vibe" of wouldbe Far North holiday-makers as Cairns prepares to welcome its first direct flight from New Zealand in 20 months.

Trans-Tasman travel will resume on Saturday with more than 100 passengers expected to touch down from Auckland, and Qantas scheduled to operate weekly services until the end of July.

Air New Zealand will also begin servicing the route from late June operating four services a week from Cairns and seven services a week next month.

Return airfares can be picked up for about \$677 with Qantas and \$565 with Air New Zealand.

Demand is expected to be limited until the ski season fires up in the neighbouring island country in July.

Cairns Airport chief executive Richard Barker said the day would be one of great excitement.

"Not just for people waiting to see loved ones again after more than a year apart, but for the teams at the airport that have worked hard to make quarantine-free travel a reality," he said.

It comes as domestic travel plans for many Cairns residents were cancelled or postponed last week when the Victorian government plunged the state into its fourth lockdown since the pandemic.

Cairns travel agent Mercedes Gonzalez said travel confidence "had dipped again" following news the outbreak began and borders closed.

"Everything was really humming and then the vibe changed," she said.

"The minute the lockdown was announced it changed the vibe of domestic holidays, that's just a reality."

But she said people were getting used to changing plans.

Mr Barker said the coronavirus flare-up in Melbourne should have no bearing on the Cairns to Auckland arrangement.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland chief executive Officer Mark Olsen said the aim was to double the share of New Zealand travellers over the next 12 months.

"Research undertaken by

TTNQ in the New Zealand market shows they are looking for diverse activities, to connect with local culture, and want a destination that is easy to get around with a good food offering and value for money," he said.

"Cairns and Great Barrier Reef is the perfect holiday destination to fulfil these needs, but most of the Kiwis we spoke to did not know what our destination has to offer outside trips to the Reef and rainforest."

Qantas and Air New Zealand have been contacted for comment.

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