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Tourism recovery hopes take flight

from PNG. the virus-ravaged

QUEENSLAND Tourism Minister Stirling Hinchliffe has backed a new direct route from Japan to Cairns and declared the state government's ambition to develop a road map back to international visitation.

The announcement of the new Qantas flights from Tokyo to Cairns has been applauded by Mr Hinchliffe and Cairns Airport boss Richard Barker and coincides with a new state government tourism recovery plan.

Mr Barker said the proposed tri-weekly service, in partnership with Japan Airlines and existing Jetstar flights between the city and Tokyo, was a crucial step in the region's recovery and positioning Cairns as the gateway to Northern Australia.

"Japan is a strategic market for Cairns Airport and one we've been proactively working on as it's core to rebuilding tourism across this region," he said.

"We're really excited about Cairns as a major port for Qantas in the rebuilding of their international network and it's something (Qantas chief executive) Alan Joyce and I discussed last week when he visited.

"We've done a great job in keeping Far North Queensland COVID-free and that's very appealing to the Japanese and the pent-up demand that we know exists there."

Mr Hinchliffe praised the planned services, saying a new tourism recovery action plan would help inform a path back to the possibility of overseas holiday-makers.

"Obviously, in terms of our international borders, fundamentally that's a matter for the Australian government," he said. "But we welcome it (international tourism) when it's appropriate on the basis of the public health advice."

It comes as Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk made an impassioned plea for hospitality and tourism workers to leave the cities behind for Port Douglas, with the seaside gem currently experiencing a staff shortage.

Speaking at Port Douglas on Thursday, Ms Palaszczuk said she had met a number of local tourism operators and the message was "loud and clear" – they needed staff.

"So if you are anywhere else in Queensland or Australia and you're thinking about moving to work, I don't think there is a better place than Port Douglas," she said.

The seaside village was already beginning to fill up for the Easter holidays and beyond, with some accommodation already at "80-90 per cent" capacity.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland boss Mark Olsen said the announcements boosted confidence to travel.

"Consumers are coming back in great numbers through Easter and right through until June and July," he said.

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