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June is tipped for NZ take-off

A GREEN light to Air New Zealand aircraft touching down in Cairns, expected next week, will be welcome relief to the tourism industry struggling under the fallout of international travel bans.

Early next week the New Zealand government is expected to make decisions on quarantine-free travel which will pave the way for the first postCOVID service to arrive in Cairns since the pandemic locked down international travel early last year.

Flights are loaded and available to buy on the Air New Zealand website between Auckland and Cairns.

The triweekly service is expected to begin on June 1.

Cairns Airport chief executive Richard Barker (above) was optimistic of positive news from New Zealand leaders next week.

"New Zealand is making good progress on quarantine-free and we're working with our airline partners to resume flights between Cairns and our trans-Tasman neighbours. We're hopeful of an announcement from the New Zealand government early next week," he said.

"Once we get the green light we're looking forward to welcoming back flights from New Zealand. New Zealand is one of our priority markets and

Auckland has many international connections. The return of the Cairns – Auckland route means the region is well-positioned as countries open up and international travel returns."

Experience Co chief executive John O'Sullivan said pre-COVID New Zealand was Australia's largest market in terms of inbound numbers and Kiwis ranked fifth in terms of expenditure.

"We are very excited at the prospect of travellers from New Zealand. We know New Zealand travellers love going to the Reef and hinterland around Port Douglas and we think it will be very positive," he said.

"Tourism Australia and Tourism Events Queensland will be active in the marketing and promoting Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef and I think there is great opportunity to take advantage of this market."

Passions of Paradise chief executive Scott Garden said the new route would be a much-needed shot in the arm.

"It will be a confidence boost and a financial boost. It will show people in this country that if it all right for New Zealanders then they can take a holiday in their own backyard too," he said.



"Everyone is going to welcome them the restaurants, hotels, the operators, we will love to show New Zealanders the Great Barrier Reef.

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