

MEDIA RELEASE

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New aviation and tourism package the confidence boost travellers need

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) says the Australian Government's new aviation and tourism support package announced today will provide a confidence boost to travellers and much-needed support to the aviation sector.

AAA Chief Executive James Goodwin said the new funding initiatives would encourage more Australians to start booking flights and travel to a range of tourism destinations across the nation.

"The time to start planning a holiday is now," Mr Goodwin said.

"Anything that can fill seats and put more aircraft in the sky is a good thing and will have flow-on effects for the airport sector.

"It's been just over a year since COVID-19 hit and during this time, all airports have been doing it extremely tough. They've been in major need of support and are grateful the Federal Government has listened to their calls with this new package.

"Once the half-price airfares go on sale on 1 April, the first phase of the government's vaccination program should be complete which means there should be no reason for states and territories to close their borders.

"In order for this support package to work, the premiers must agree to put an end to these knee-jerk reactions which have resulted in major setbacks for our sector's recovery.

"The government has highlighted that international travel will be back on the cards from October. It's crucial for the government to start working with industry on a plan to reopen the border so that we can be ready to go.

"Domestic travel cannot take the place of international tourism. The best assistance the government can provide to the sector is to get the international border open as quickly as possible."

Mr Goodwin said the package would provide significant relief for airports in meeting the costs of government-mandated security screening of passengers and freight.

"We're confident half-price airfares to select tourism destinations will result in a major increase of passengers to smaller regional airports such as Burnie, Merimbula and Kangaroo Island while also benefitting the major airports which service the regional routes," Mr Goodwin said.

"Airports have done it tough but the workers have done it tougher which is why the new 'Services Accreditation Support Program' will be crucial in ensuring thousands of staff including ground handlers

maintain their mandatory training, certification and accreditation so that they're ready to stand back up when the demand returns.

"Support to help cover the costs of international security screening is absent in this package with airports expected to foot a bill of \$172 million over the next 12 months to cover the shortfall. Airports are hopeful the government will reconsider this support measure in May's Federal Budget."

Ends.

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