



Media Release

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Expert group formed to investigate safely opening trans-Tasman travel

Plans for re-opening trans-Tasman travel are gathering momentum with the establishment of a new business-led expert group to investigate and develop recommended solutions for the safe reopening of borders between Australia and New Zealand.

Today the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum (ANZLF) announced the formation of the 'Trans-Tasman Safe Border Group' - a joint working group made up of health experts and airline, airport and border agency representatives from each country who will develop a comprehensive proposal for reopening the air border, and share this with Ministers on both sides of the Tasman.

"Over many years Australia and New Zealand have developed a unique and close relationship and the prosperity of our nations is closely intertwined," said Ann Sherry AO, ANZLF Australian Co-Chair.

"Both countries have been successful in containing the spread of COVID-19 to date, and it makes sense for Australia and New Zealand to look to each other first to reopen our borders, when the time is right and it's safe for us to do so. We welcome the efforts of our respective governments to consider the next phase of the economic rebuild for our countries, and include trans-Tasman travel as part of their strategies," Ms Sherry said.

Australia and New Zealand are two of the most integrated economies in the world, with a Single Economic Market agenda in place to support a seamless trans-Tasman business environment. Each country is vital to the success of each other's small and medium-sized businesses, and contribute strongly to each other's tourism sectors, with estimated \$3 billion in international visitor spend each way every year.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, New Zealand was the most popular outbound travel destination for Australians with 1.5 million visiting in 2019, accounting for 40% of all foreign visitors to New Zealand. Likewise, Australia was the most popular outbound travel destination for Kiwis. New Zealand is Australia's second largest source market for visitors (behind China), with 1.4 million visitors in 2019, accounting for 15% of total visitors to Australia.

Initiated by Auckland Airport, and supported by the Tourism and Transport Forum Australia (TTF), the ANZLF will co-ordinate the Trans-Tasman Safe Border Group which will involve about 20 public and private sector experts working together to produce a package of recommendations for new safe border processing for inbound and outbound travelers.

Margy Osmond, Australian Co-chair of the ANZLF Tourism Sector Group said: "Our target outcome will be a set of safe travel processes to manage health risks while allowing trans-Tasman travel to recommence without the need for a 14-day compulsory quarantine or self-isolation period on arrival in the destination country. Our proposal will be shared with government Ministers on each side of the Tasman for consideration."

The group will focus on two core workstreams - airfield, crew, aircraft and other ground handling and operational components, and a second workstream focused on passengers, including inflight protocols, border processing, embarking and disembarking and robust health requirements, such as testing and contact tracing for visitors in country.

“While our countries continue to focus on the number one priority of getting the virus under control, we can start planning and testing for what might be possible in the future to help us connect again with family and friends and to safely support the restart of tourism and trade,” said Auckland Airport Chief Executive Adrian Littlewood.

“It’s going to take time and a collective effort to develop solutions, but drawing on the expertise of this group and the ANZLF our hope is that all parts of the system will be ready to go when the health evidence supports it,” he said.

Sydney Airport Chief Executive Officer Geoff Culbert said the development of safe procedures that help to reopen our borders will be critical to support Australia – New Zealand business links, which are vital to both economies.

“Establishing Australia-New Zealand travel will support important links that are vital to both economies, particularly tourism, which needs all the help it can get,” he said.

“There’s real merit in using Australia-New Zealand travel as an international test case, establishing proof of concept that can be rolled out more broadly to other markets when the time is right.”

The ANZLF has a strong track record of collaboration, successfully working alongside government to support the development and implementation of initiatives such as e-Gate technology as part of the Single Economic Market border workstream. Airlines, airports and border and health officials on both sides of the Tasman have already committed to supporting the Trans-Tasman Safe Border Group which is expected to commence its work within the next week.

The Trans-Tasman Safe Border Group will also recommend how the trans-Tasman border experience could be used to model and test processes that could be applied to other countries in the future to enable progressive lifting of border restrictions.

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About the ANZLF

- Since 2004 the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum (ANZLF) has brought business and government together to help Australia and New Zealand prosper.

- The ANZLF enables discussion between senior business and government leaders about ways to improve business and trade between Australia and New Zealand.
- The ANZLF is steered by the Australian and New Zealand Co-Chairs, Ann Sherry AO (Advisor Carnival Australia) and Greg Lowe (Group Chief Executive at Beca).
- ANZLF manages business-led Sector Groups focused on driving change across five key areas: Innovation, Tourism, Health Technology, Infrastructure, and Indigenous Business, while working closely with the Australian and New Zealand governments on the Single Economic Market (SEM) Agenda. It also has an Emerging Leaders Group.
- The Tourism Sector Group has historically focused on delivering a streamlined travel experience across the Tasman which strengthens borders, as well as identifying and implementing practical/low cost efficiency measures towards seamless trans-Tasman travel.
- With borders now closed, the co-chairs of the Tourism Sector group will lead a new and focused Trans-Tasman Safe Border Group tasked specifically with designing a proposal for how the trans-Tasman border could be safely reopened when the time is right. This new group will be able to draw on its strong working relationships with public and private sector and understanding of Trans-Tasman travel and border processes enabling fast progress.
- The Tourism Sector group is co-chaired by Margy Osmond, CEO Tourism and Transport Forum Australia and Scott Tasker, General Manager Aeronautical Commercial Auckland International Airport.
- ANZLF is supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and leading Australian and New Zealand businesses.

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