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NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH AIR NEW ZEALAND TO ENCOURAGE MORE VISITORS TO NSW

More visitors to New South Wales from New Zealand are expected through a new partnership announced today between the NSW Government and Air New Zealand.

The NSW Government's tourism and major events agency Destination NSW has entered into a new two-year strategic partnership with the airline.

NSW Premier Mike Baird announced the partnership in Auckland today, during his first official visit to New Zealand as Premier.

"In the year to March 2015, we welcomed 396,000 visitors from New Zealand to NSW and this agreement will encourage even more people to visit this great State," Mr Baird said.

"We have strong cultural, diplomatic and business links with New Zealand that will all benefit from initiatives such as these.

"It's estimated this partnership will increase the number of visitors from New Zealand and will result in an additional estimated \$6.4 million in annual overnight visitor expenditure to NSW."

Destination NSW CEO Sandra Chipchase said the new agreement cements the strong relationship that already exists and will result in more visitors to the state's major events.

"The close proximity of our countries means Sydney and Regional NSW are fantastic short break destinations where New Zealanders can come to enjoy our spectacular scenery, food and wine and many of the best major events in Australia," Ms Chipchase said.

"In the past month alone we have welcomed visitors from New Zealand who have come to see major events such as the Bledisloe Cup and 2015 Netball World Cup.

"We also have a packed Spring and Summer Calendar to look forward to that includes the Sydney Running Festival, NRL Grand Final, Australian Open of Golf, Matilda The Musical, Rugby Sevens, AUS-X Open Supercross and V8 Supercars Sydney 500."

Christopher Luxon, Air New Zealand's Chief Executive Officer said the agreement further strengthens Air New Zealand's relationship with New South Wales.

"New South Wales has always been a popular destination for New Zealanders and we fly more seats from New Zealand to Sydney than to any other international destination on our network. This partnership will encourage more Kiwis to hop across the ditch to Sydney and also to explore greater NSW with our alliance partner Virgin Australia."

In the year to March 2015, visitors from New Zealand stayed a total of 4.5 million nights in NSW and spent \$473 million during their stay. The average length of stay for visitors from New Zealand to NSW was 11 nights.

Air New Zealand and alliance partner Virgin Australia operate direct flights to Sydney from the major cities of Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch and Queenstown.