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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **ATR WEEKENDS IN WHANGANUI**

Flights in and out of Whanganui have become so popular in the last 3 years Air Chathams have decided to fly their newly acquired ATR 72 on the route for weekend flights over the next three months. The ATR 72 can seat up to 68 passengers and is regularly used for charters around New Zealand. Only a few months out from the airline's 3 year anniversary servicing Whanganui, it's also a celebration of growth in demand. The "River City" peak flight schedules are now at a level able to support the higher capacity aircraft.

While charter requirements for the ATR72 won't begin again until September this year, the ATR is scheduled for flights into Whanganui beginning on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June with a 3:00pm departure from Auckland. For the next few months, Friday afternoon and evening flights, Saturday's 8:00am flight departing from Whanganui, all Sunday flights and the 6:45am departure on Monday to Auckland will be with the larger plane.

"This is a brilliant achievement for the airline to have grown demand for the Whanganui sector in such a short space of time," says Duane Emeny, General Manager for Air Chathams. "Our success is very much due to the support and commitment of the Whanganui community from the beginning and the continued support and loyalty shown over time. Whanganui has become like a second home for us so we are really proud to bring our newest and biggest aircraft into the region over winter."

"Air Chathams has serviced our community really well over the three years since they took over the Whanganui-Auckland route. With an increase in Whanganui's population and the interest we are getting from the rest of the country I am not surprised that an ATR 72 has been added to their fleet to assist with greater passenger demand. Air Chathams helps maintain Whanganui's relationship with our biggest city, whether that be for work, to visit friends and family, or as a gateway for international travel. I look forward to travelling on the ATR 72," says Mayor McDouall.

There's another bonus on the other side of the North Island – while the ATR72 is in Whanganui it opens up the opportunity for a trial of SAAB 340 services to Whakatane for a period once the runway end safety areas have been completed. Following the discovery of several shell middens during excavation work, earthworks were paused in October last year which has unfortunately delayed the completion of this project.

The two routes have continued to grow and the same is hoped for the Auckland-Norfolk direct route due to start early September this year.

Ends.

For more information, please contact:

Lyn Cheyne,  
Sales and Marketing Manager  
AIR CHATHAMS  
T: 021 580 398  
E: [marketing@airchathams.co.nz](mailto:marketing@airchathams.co.nz)  
W: [www.airchathams.co.nz](http://www.airchathams.co.nz)