



11<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **WHAKATĀNE READY FOR BIGGER AIRCRAFT**

Plans to introduce the larger Air Chathams SAAB 340 to Whakatāne have come to fruition with the first flights beginning on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November. With demand continuing to grow for air travel to and from the region, the SAAB can cater for up to 34 passengers, almost doubling the existing Metroliner service at 19 seats. The SAAB will be used for peak demand services initially.

Passengers on Friday afternoon flights from Auckland at 3:15pm and 6:35pm and well as those travelling from Whakatāne at 4:45pm can look forward to flying in the larger SAAB 340. Higher levels of customer service will be provided with a flight attendant on board serving tea, coffee and Tim Tams as they do on other regional flights. The SAAB's also have toilet facilities on board unlike the smaller Metroliner.

It will also operate the Saturday morning 8:00am departure to Auckland, Sunday flights from Auckland to Whakatāne departing at 11:00am and 6:15pm, Whakatāne to Auckland at 4:45pm on Saturday and the early Monday morning flight to Auckland at 6:45am. While the timing is perfect for the upcoming summer holiday period, Air Chathams will monitor and assess ongoing demand.

"We're really excited to begin bringing the SAAB to Whakatāne," says Duane Emeny, Air Chathams' General Manager. "We know our regular fliers will appreciate the extra comforts provided and this will give us some flexibility across the service where other flights exceed the Metroliner capacity. We hope to be able to offer the SAAB service more permanently in the future."

Whakatāne District Mayor Judy Turner says the SAAB service will help to boost visitor numbers to the Whakatāne District just in time for the busy summer season. "This is great news for our District, and will be beneficial for locals and visitors alike," says Mayor Turner. "We're grateful that our investment into the airport is being supported by Air Chathams', and the SAAB service is a great example of the airline's commitment to the Whakatāne District."

An invitation-only event is to be held on Wednesday, 27 November in conjunction with the Whakatāne District Council for media and selected guests. It will be an occasion to mark the growth of the regional service and allow guests to board and view the SAAB 340 before flights commence.

Ends.

#### Images:

- i. SAAB 340 at Whakatane Airport
- ii. SAAB 340 in flight
- iii. SAAB 340 interior cabin

For more information about the SAAB 340, please visit:  
<https://www.airchathams.co.nz/our-story/fleet/saab340>

SAAB Flight Schedule:

Whakatāne to Auckland			Auckland to Whakatāne		
<i>Monday</i>			<i>Friday</i>		
3C821	6:45am depart	7:30am arrive	3C824	3:15pm depart	4:00pm arrive
<i>Friday</i>			<i>Sunday</i>		
3C829	4:45pm depart	5:30pm arrive	3C832	11:00am depart	11:45pm arrive
<i>Saturday</i>			<i>Sunday</i>		
3C823	8:00am depart	8:45am arrive	3C830	6:15pm depart	7:00pm arrive
<i>Sunday</i>					
3C829	4:45pm depart	5:30pm arrive			

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