THE NEW ZEALAND LINK

Simon Bevilacqua in ‘Into the trans-Tasman bubble’ (Mercury 25 April) is a timely reminder of the importance of our trade and tourism potential post virus with New Zealand.He rightly emphasises the need for the return of flights between Christchurch and Hobart for trade and tourism.

The Hobart-Christchurch airlink was withdrawn in 1996 despite Air New Zealand and Qantas as joint operators experiencing passenger loadings of 80% over the period of the service. On October 13 1995 I returned from Christchurch after a period as Erskine Fellow at the University of Canterbury on a full passenger flight.

The Hobart-Christchurch services ended due to financial problems with Air New Zealand and not to a lack of patronage. New Zealand and Tasmania are both key destinations on the global map of ecotourism.

Both Tasmania and New Zealand market their tourism brands as clean and green. Co-marketing has the potential to boost tourism in both locations.

In 1995 Professor Kissling then Head of Transport Studies at Lincoln University and I discussed the potential for both Tasmania and South Island as transit points for a clockwise flow of passengers into Christchurch from North Asia and North America to Hobart and out via Melbourne/Sydney/Brisbane to Auckland/Wellington.

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Hobart International Airport kept open the possibility of renewing the Hobart-New Zealand airlink .However the decision would be dependent on its commercial viability. In 2008 I presented a promotion from Hobart International Airport to and air and space conference in Seoul.Research I have carried out with Walter Glass of Corporate Logistics (Palmerston North) and interested aviation players in Christchurch indicate support for the airlink being reintroduced.

The replacement of the air link from Hobart to New Zealand has the potential to boost tourism in both locations, and make Hobart a transit point rather than a one way station.

In 2014Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF) believed that as a result of the Federal government reviewing the bureaucracy around international flight operations as many as 10 regional airports on Australia’s east coast could open up flights to New Zealand and add up to 100,000 new visitors a year.

A TTF’s spokesperson noted that the Sunshine Coast had successfully conducted three trial years of seasonal flights from New Zealand, contributing $14.5M to the local economy and that“ New Zealand may already be Australia’s No 1 tourism source market, but we believe opening up airports for direct flights from Auckland and Christchurch is a key strategy in boosting visitation even further by offering new destinations”.

In the end it will be a commercial decision for the airlines and an outcome for Hobart International Airport to pursue. In 2008 I presented to an air and space law conference in Seoul a marketing promotion from Hobart International Airport.

Support for the renewal of flights from Hobart to New Zealand should be a target for the Tasmanian Tourism Council.

John Livermore

Member Association of Australian and New Zealand Air Law

This article does not necessarily reflect the views of the AANZLA

www.johnlivermore.com

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