

## **Media Release | 21 May 2014**

# **Auckland Airport to receive funding for food and wine tourism ‘cluster’ project to drive Chinese tourism growth**

**The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) announced today that Auckland Airport is to be a recipient of the Tourism Growth Partnership Fund for its retail and tourism ‘cluster’ project to accelerate high value tourism growth out of China.**

The purpose of the Tourism Growth Partnership Fund is to lift New Zealand’s export performance by investing in projects that will help the tourism sector achieve greater commercial returns from high-value international visitors.

Jason Delamore, Auckland Airport’s general manager of marketing and communications, says the airport is delighted to receive a total of \$1.11 million from the Tourism Growth Partnership Fund and adds that it will also invest up to \$1.75 million into the project itself over three years.

“Our project is focused on building sustainable air connectivity by growing high value passenger numbers from China,” says Mr Delamore. “It will start in the Guangdong region of China as it is the country’s largest consumer market with one of the highest per capita disposable incomes. This, coupled with the direct flight access between Auckland and Guangdong, means there is an immediate and significant opportunity

to increase the number of high-value visitors that come to New Zealand from China. As we learn about what techniques are most effective we can extend our reach into other regions of China.”

“The cluster project aims to capitalise on this opportunity by promoting to Guangdong residents the high-end holiday activities that New Zealand has to offer, with a focus on our premium position in food and wine production.”

“Research has indicated that local food and wine offerings are one of the most important triggers for Chinese travellers, however a clear perception gap exists for Chinese visitors around New Zealand’s ability to provide this. For example, only 47 per cent of Chinese travellers dined out during their time in New Zealand while another 40 per cent would have liked to, but didn’t.”

“Our cluster project will aim to bridge this gap and take advantage of the untapped potential that clearly exists in the food and wine experiences that New Zealand is providing for Chinese visitors. It will also have an emphasis on improving seasonal passenger flows which will benefit a wide variety of businesses throughout New Zealand, as well as helping to deliver on the Tourism Industry Association’s Tourism 2025 ambition to address seasonality.”

“One of the key actions that Auckland Airport will implement as part of the project is the development in Guangdong of a stronger in-market sales presence for New Zealand tourism offerings. This will include people on-the-ground in Guangdong to facilitate New Zealand travel options for high net worth individuals. It will also involve proactively building a database of interested Chinese travellers in order to provide a sustainable marketing opportunity for the New Zealand tourism industry.”

“As well as this, the project will have an emphasis on enabling a cluster approach by bringing together New Zealand tourism operators, travel sellers and New Zealand product retailers in Guangdong. This will be done through the development of a website that will promote, and provide the opportunity for people to buy, premium New Zealand products in China. All of these initiatives will have a focus on targeting high-value and independent Chinese travellers who provide the highest value opportunity for the New Zealand tourism industry and economy.”

“We are already experiencing very impressive growth from the Chinese market. Total Chinese visitor arrivals for the 12 months to March 2014 were up 14 per cent when compared to the same period the year before,” says Mr Delamore. “We believe our cluster project will continue to build on this growth and help us to reach toward our Ambition 2025 aspiration of over 890,000 Chinese visitor arrivals by 2025, as well as our goal to become the number one gateway and destination in Australasia for Chinese holiday arrivals.”

For further information, please contact:

Katie Moore

+64 9 255 9061

+64 27 473 1989