

20 March 2020

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **DRAMATIC FALL IN PASSENGER NUMBERS AHEAD**

Passenger numbers are falling dramatically at Queensland Airports Limited's main ports this month following further Federal Government travel restrictions, reductions to airline services and general changes to travel behaviour.

QAL CEO Chris Mills said the impacts of COVID-19 started to be felt in February by the airport group, which owns and operates Gold Coast, Townsville, Mount Isa and Longreach airports, but the decline has accelerated significantly in March.

"With these cuts, passenger numbers at Gold Coast Airport could be back to the figures we saw almost 20 years ago," he said.

"Given that two thirds of all passengers at Gold Coast Airport are inbound visitors, the impact this is having on the Gold Coast economy is significant.

"On just one key Gold Coast route with one airline group, we have seen combined return services cut from almost 100 per week down to 35. In the next few months, we are expecting traffic to be around a quarter of what we normally see this time of year, including over what would normally be a busy Easter holiday period.

"In Townsville, we have seen similar cuts so far with more details to come on the regional routes."

Mr Mills said it was a challenging time for the business, with the aviation sector particularly hard hit by COVID-19.

"We are completely focused on guiding our business through these difficult times, however we do expect tough decisions will need to be made," he said.

"Apart from the airlines, who are clearly hurting, there are so many other jobs linked to airport activities – our teams, retailers, car hire, construction – the list goes on.

"Our people, passengers and partners are top of mind during this crisis.

"We continue to work with the federal and state government authorities regarding the COVID-19 response. Beyond the immediate crisis, their support for this industry will be critical."

In February a total of 575,737 passengers passed through QAL's four ports – representing a decrease of 0.6 per cent on the previous corresponding period. At QAL's largest port, Gold Coast Airport, there was a 2.1 per cent decline in the month, while conditions were more positive in Townsville and Mount Isa, where a 4.8 per cent and 9.6 per cent respective rise in passenger numbers was seen in February.

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<b>February 2020 results</b>			
<b>Airport</b>	<b>Feb 2020</b>	<b>Feb 2019</b>	<b>Change</b>
Gold Coast	449,027	458,843	-2.1%
Townsville	107,774	102,795	4.8%
Mount Isa	16,889	15,410	9.6%
Longreach	2,047	2,055	-0.4%
<b>Total passengers</b>	<b>575,737</b>	<b>579,103</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>

ENDS.