

REPORT: AIRLINES: SOUTHWEST PACIFIC

What you need to know

December 2024

This report presents a roundup of what's been happening to airlines in the Southwest Pacific region over the last month.

Australia

Regional Express

National Jet Express stake sold

The administrators of Regional Express (Rex) have sold the company's 50% stake in charter operator National Jet Express (NJE) to its other shareholders. NJE primarily operates on mining charter services in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

Virgin Australia

Tie-up with Qatar Airways gets interim approval

Australia's competition authority, the ACCC, has granted interim authorization to Virgin Australia and Qatar Airways, allowing them to start marketing new flights between Australia and Qatar. Qatar Airways will operate Boeing 777-300ERs on the flights under wetlease to Virgin Australia. Flights from Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney to Doha will start on June 6, 2025, with services from Perth following in November, subject to other approvals. This will mark the restart of long-haul services by Virgin Australia.

The ACCC is continuing to evaluate the two airlines' request for a five-year authorization.

New Zealand

Air New Zealand

Engine issues weigh on profit expectations

Air New Zealand expects engine issues with its Airbus A321neos and Boeing 787-9s to drag down its first-half profits. Current guidance suggests profits of NZ\$120-160 million (US\$70-94 million) compared to the NZ\$185 million posted by the airline in the second half of 2023. The engine issues are expected to persist into 2026.

Electric flights to be demonstrated in April

From April 2025, Air New Zealand and Beta Technologies plan to start demonstration flights of the ALIA CX300 battery-powered aircraft. These will initially be based out of Hamilton airport. The plan is to use the aircraft on domestic cargo flights in 2026 to provide an understanding of the technology's performance.

Other markets

Aircalin

New aircraft to support long-haul operations

New Caledonia-based airline Aircalin has placed an order for two Airbus A350-900s. These will join its existing fleet of two five-year old A330-900s and two A320neos. The new aircraft will feature more business class seating than the A330s and will be key to Aircalin sustaining its recently-inaugurated Noumea-Paris services via Bangkok.

The information presented in this report represents the latest view as at December 20, 2024. We have carefully researched and checked the information contained. However, we do not guarantee or warrant the correctness, completeness or topicality of this article and do not accept any liability for any damage or loss as a result of the use of the information contained within this article.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please email mike.eggleton@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.