

Media Release

The Hon Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Creative Industries



Saturday, 2 September 2023

LATAM TOUCHES DOWN LANDING MORE JOBS AND TOURISTS IN VICTORIA

The first direct flight between Santiago and Melbourne since the pandemic will land at Melbourne Airport today – bringing more visitors to the state, boosting trade and exports and creating hundreds of local jobs.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos welcomed the return of LATAM Airlines, as Latin America’s largest airline restarts its direct flights between Santiago, Chile and Melbourne.

Backed by the Andrews Labor Government and Melbourne Airport, LATAM’s direct flights to Melbourne are starting with three flights a week – adding more than 38,500 seat capacity. This will generate \$52.5 million for the Victorian economy each year – creating an estimated 297 new jobs in our aviation and tourism sectors.

The flights will better connect Victoria to Santiago, a major hub in Latin America, as well as other key markets in the region including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. There are growing opportunities in the region for Victorian businesses in industries like agri-food, energy, mining and minerals.

With more than 1,560 tonnes of annual air freight capacity, the flights on the airline’s Boeing 787-900 aircraft will strengthen our export access to Latin America. In 2021-22, two-way trade between Victoria and the region was valued at \$2.8 billion.

The direct flights will help accelerate the return of Latin American visitors to the state, with more than 80,000 visitors from the region contributing \$242 million to the local economy in 2019.

Victoria is also a popular study destination for students from Latin America, with more than 14,000 international students from the region enrolled in Victorian institutions in 2022.

Melbourne has returned to 85 per cent of its pre-pandemic international seat capacity as LATAM marks the 36th international airline to restart flights to the state since borders reopened.

LATAM adds to a growing list of major international airlines the Government has supported to increase flights to Melbourne including Qantas, Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, United Airlines, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Bamboo Airways, Scoot, VietJet and China Southern Airlines.

Quote attributable to Acting Minister for Industry and Innovation Steve Dimopoulos

“LATAM’s return to Melbourne is a vote of confidence in our visitor economy as we welcome back more tourists and students from Latin America, while boosting exports and local jobs.”

Quote attributable to Melbourne Airport Chief Executive Officer Lorie Argus

“The resumption of flights to Santiago restores our direct connection to South America and brings the number of international carriers flying into Melbourne back to pre-pandemic levels. Prior to Covid-19 we had 36 airlines operating international flights into Melbourne Airport and returning to that number has taken hard work from our team and the Victorian state government.”

Quote attributable to LATAM Airlines Country Manager - Oceania Chris Ellis

“Thanks to the support of Melbourne Airport and the Victorian Government, we can now meet the strong demand for travel to South America. LATAM is the leading airline in South America, serving more than 144 destinations and is a global leader in sustainability.”

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