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## Extended regional air service a good start

Today's announcement that Jetstar will offer four extra regional destinations to its New Zealand routes and the suggestion that more will likely be added is positive news for regional and rural communities, says New Zealand Rural General Practice Network chief executive Dalton Kelly.

At a launch in Wellington today (August 31), Jetstar revealed its new regional network in New Zealand, launching low fares on routes between Nelson, Napier, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Auckland and Wellington. Jetstar says the new regional routes would build a strong base for considering more regional destinations in future.

This is a great initiative and comes with the suggestion that more regional services are to follow, says Mr Kelly.

“Jetstar has indicated that it might add other regional destinations to the mix and this along with today's announcement of extra routes and initial lower airfares overcomes a significant barrier to reliable and affordable air links to New Zealand's heartland.

“As an organisation that recruits locum GPs and Nurse Practitioners to rural New Zealand it is extremely important that we have reliable and affordable air access as part of the process of putting professionals on the ground in rural New Zealand via these regionals hubs.

“Without that access it makes the task harder to attract and get medical and nursing professionals to some places, as well as giving them good access out when required.

“When placed in context with other projects, such as the rural broadband initiative, now in its second stage, and the focus on the mental health and well-being of rural communities by a range of agencies and organisations, the future looks brighter for rural New Zealand,” says Mr Kelly.

For more information contact Dalton Kelly, telephone 027 231 0067.