

More choice for air travellers

Palmerston North flights assessed for Jetstar's new regional routes

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Wanganui people could be in line for more choice for domestic air travel, with Jetstar announcing yesterday that it was expanding its regional services.

The airline, a subsidiary of Australia's national airline Qantas, has not finalised the routes but it is adding five Bombardier Q300 50-seater planes to service the expanded network.

While Wanganui is not in the mix, Jetstar is looking at Palmerston North as one of those new terminals. It still means a 50-minute drive for Wanganui travellers but will offer a much broader option for connecting flights around the country and to Jetstar's international services.

The new services are a direct challenge to the lucrative domestic routes dominated by Air New Zealand.

Announcing the new services, Qantas Group chief executive Alan Joyce, said the time was right to bring the airline's low fares to the regions, with the new services starting in December.

Mr Joyce said at least four



MORE ROUTES: Budget airline Jetstar is giving Kiwis more domestic flight options, and targeting regional airports in New Zealand.

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initial regional destinations would be served by Jetstar's Bombardier aircraft. As well as Palmerston North, other airports being considered were Hamilton, Rotorua, New Plymouth, Napier, Nelson and Invercargill. Tickets will go on sale in September.

"These new regional destinations will connect with the broader Qantas network, including both Qantas and Jetstar flying across the Tasman."

When the no-frills airline

started in New Zealand in 2009, domestic fares across the country dropped by around 40 per cent and Jetstar expects fares will drop considerably on regional routes.

Jetstar executives will be visiting a number of regional centres to determine the first regional destinations. The airline currently has a fleet of nine Airbus A320 aircraft covering its services linking Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dun-

edin and Queenstown.

While it has a firm grip on the domestic market — its major generator of earnings — Air New Zealand has copped criticism over the past year for ceasing flying to a number of smaller regional centres.

The airline cut its Wanganui to Wellington service some years ago, leaving only its connection to Auckland

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