

Qantas cuts international flights until October

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Australian flag-carrier Qantas on Thursday said it had cut all international flights until late October, except those to New Zealand, as border restrictions look set to remain in force.

The decision comes after Australian tourism minister Simon Birmingham said overseas travel was unlikely to restart before next year.

"With Australia's borders set to remain closed for some time, we have cancelled most [international flights](#) until late October," a Qantas spokesperson said in a statement.

"We still have some flights scheduled across the Tasman in the coming months, with the expected travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand."

Australia and New Zealand are unwinding coronavirus restrictions after successfully suppressing its spread to relatively low numbers.

New Zealand broke a 24-day run with no new cases on Tuesday after it emerged two women who recently arrived from Britain were allowed out of quarantine early without being tested for the virus, even though one had mild symptoms.

A special arrangement could be made for some travellers, such as overseas students, but international tourism was not likely in the near future, Birmingham told Australia's Today Show on Thursday morning.

"In terms of letting tourism and travel just open up freely again, I think that's quite some way off," he said.

The comments come after he urged Australians to holiday locally, to help replace some of the Aus\$45.2 billion (US\$31 billion) international [tourism](#) nets the country every year.

"We want them to feel an almost patriotic duty to get out and support the jobs and small businesses of their fellow citizens by having whatever Aussie holiday they can," he said in a speech at the National Press Club

in Canberra on Wednesday.

According to Qantas some Australians were already embracing new freedoms, with passengers on the carrier doubling from 34,000 last week to 64,000 this week.

Australia has just two full-service airlines, Virgin and Qantas, which are complemented by their budget offshoots, Tigerair and Jetstar.

Virgin Australia Group went into voluntary administration in late April as the global aviation industry came to a halt owing to international border closures designed to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Both airlines are slowly ramping up domestic flights with Qantas hoping to increase routes to 40 percent of pre-pandemic levels by July as demand grows.

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