



CATHAY TOUCHES DOWN IN WELLCAMP

News / Airlines



Brisbane West Wellcamp has become Australia's latest international airport with the arrival of a **Cathay Pacific** Boeing 747-8F.

The **Cathay** freighter, registered B-LJA, touched down a little after 1430 local time on Monday from Sydney and was due to be on the ground for about 90 minutes while cargo such as chilled beef, mangoes, pecan nuts and grains from the surrounding Darling Downs region was loaded before departing to Hong Kong. There was also some heavy machinery being loaded on the flight such as a helicopter

It is the first international flight from the airport, which celebrated its one-year anniversary earlier in November.

While the cargo service is a one-off, airport owners Wagners are keen to have more freighter flights operating directly to Asia in the future.



The 747-8F with its nose door open at Wellcamp.

Australian Aviation understands Cathay, which has been looking at cargo flights to Wellcamp since the airport opened in November 2014, is picking up between 70 and 75 tonnes of cargo destined for Hong Kong, greater China and even beyond to the Americas.

Such was the demand, Cathay was unable to accept some cargo.

Wagners chairman John Wagner described the flight as a great day for Australia.

"If it all goes well today we will be having more discussions with Cathay Pacific to see if we can convince them at some time in the future to start a scheduled service into and out of Wellcamp," Wagner told reporters prior to the landing of B-LJA on Monday.

"That's something that we will work very hard on on behalf of the producers in the region."

"Every time I go up to Asia, and not just China but the other Asian countries, we just get bombarded with requests for fresh, safe produce from this region."

Wagner said the airport was also in discussions with other airlines about live animal exports from Wellcamp, and flagged a closed charter passenger flight from Wellcamp to China in April.



The 747-8F lands at Wellcamp.

Cathay general manager for Southwest Pacific Nelson Chin said there was much potential in Wellcamp.

“It is an exploratory trip but hopefully this will lead to better things, bigger things,” Chin said.

Chin said the free-trade agreement between Australia and China, which is currently before parliament, would open up a lot of doors and benefit the Darling Downs region.

The event has attracted widespread interest from the community in Toomwoomba, with about 1,000 invited guests at the terminal to watch the landing and departure, while plenty more were parked on the other side of the runway to witness the historic event.

Wellcamp is the 436th airport certified to accept the Boeing 747 family of aircraft.

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