Voluntary Aviation Passenger Information Charter

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Purpose of the Charter

Aviation connects New Zealanders to each other and to the world, supporting the economy and helping communities stay connected. When flights are delayed, cancelled, or overbooked, passengers need accurate, clear and accessible information about their rights so they can understand their options and make informed decisions.

Airlines that sign this Charter recognise the importance of passengers having accurate, clear, accessible, and easy-to-understand information about their rights. The Charter provides a shared framework for signatories to demonstrate their commitment to making that information available in a consistent, timely, and practical way, particularly at points in the passenger journey when people are most likely to need it.

Status of the Charter

Signing up to the Charter is voluntary for all airlines licensed to operate either domestically within New Zealand, or internationally to and from New Zealand. Developed with input from airlines, this Charter sets voluntary commitments for signatories. It does not create legally enforceable rights or obligations. The commitments apply to domestic flights within New Zealand and international flights arriving in or departing from New Zealand.

Signatories are committed to taking reasonable steps to make information about passengers' rights clear and easy to access. Airlines will incorporate this commitment into their operations, sharing information with passengers about their rights as appropriate. The Charter recognises that airlines have different business models and systems, which may shape how signatories meet these commitments.

This Charter does not change airlines' obligations under relevant legislation, including consumer protection, human rights, and accessibility laws. Instead, it sets out practical ways signatories can support compliance by giving passengers accurate, clear, accessible, and easy-to-understand information about their rights.

Where passengers book through a travel agent or other third party, the agent is responsible for passing relevant information on to them. Airlines will support this by making information about passengers' rights publicly available on their websites and available to agents selling their services. During a disruption, airlines will also contact passengers directly where the agent has provided the passenger's contact details.

The Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport will establish and administer the Charter, including overseeing its publication and the process for becoming and remaining a signatory.

Underlying principles

These principles underpin the commitments of the Charter. Airlines will take reasonable steps to:

- provide passengers with accurate, timely, accessible and easy-to-understand information about their rights
- treat and communicate with passengers respectfully, fairly and without discrimination.

Commitment 1: Information before booking

This commitment is intended to ensure passengers have key information when booking directly with the airline, in a form that is easy to find and clearly communicated on airline websites or at the point of purchase.

Before payment, airlines should take reasonable steps, appropriate to their size and resources, to share information with passengers in a way that is:

- accurate, clear and easy-to-understand
- accessible, including in formats that support passengers with accessibility needs
- at or before the point of purchase, without requiring passengers to search extensively
- presented in the currency used at the point of departure
- available in the language of the point of departure, where practicable, and any other language that the airline chooses.

Examples of the types of information that airlines should take reasonable steps to share include:

- the total fare payable, including all taxes, fees, surcharges, and mandatory charges
- any optional fees and charges, such as baggage, seat selection, and meals
- any fare conditions, including any change and cancellation policies
- any checked and carry-on baggage allowances included in the fare
- links to government-published information on passenger rights relating to flight cancellations, delays, disruptions, denied boarding, and lost, delayed or damaged baggage.

Passengers may book flights through travel agents or other third parties, but the contract of carriage is with the airline, not the agent. Airlines should take reasonable steps to ensure passengers can access clear and accurate information about their rights, regardless of how they book. This may include publishing information, such as the airline's conditions of carriage, on the airline's website and providing relevant information to travel agents and other third parties selling its services.

Commitment 2: Information after booking

Passengers should have accurate and clear information about what they have purchased and know how to seek help if they need it. This commitment is intended to ensure that passengers receive clear post-booking information and can easily access information from the airline, including how to contact the airline if they need support.

When confirming a booking made directly with the airline, airlines should take reasonable steps, appropriate to their size and resources, to share information with passengers in a way that is:

- accurate, clear and easy-to-understand, so passengers know what they have booked and how to get help
- accessible, including in formats that support passengers with accessibility needs
- delivered promptly, either alongside or shortly after booking confirmation.

Examples of the types of information that airlines should take reasonable steps to share include:

- clear contact information for the airline's customer support team
- how to submit a complaint to the airline
- links to government-published information on passenger rights relating to flight cancellations, delays, disruptions, denied boarding, and lost, delayed or damaged baggage.

Commitment 3: Information during disruption

Passengers should have access to accurate, clear and timely information when their travel is disrupted, including during delays, cancellations and denied boarding. This commitment is intended to help passengers understand what is happening, what options may be available, and where they can go for support.

Airlines should take reasonable steps, appropriate to their size and resources, to share information with passengers in a way that is:

- accurate, clear and easy-to-understand
- accessible, including in formats that support passengers with accessibility needs
- easy to find, using channels passengers are likely to check during a disruption
- timely, proportionate to the nature and expected impact of the disruption, with updates on the status of the flight and the expected departure time provided as soon as practicable and as further information becomes available
- clear and specific enough for passengers to understand their situation and what to do next.

Examples of the types of information that airlines should take reasonable steps to share include:

- where a delay is expected to materially affect a passenger's travel plans, or where a flight is cancelled:
    - if within 24 hours of departure, the reason for the disruption, where known
    - confirmation if a flight is cancelled
    - any available rebooking or alternative travel options
    - any applicable support or assistance rights or options
    - any applicable refund, reimbursement or compensation rights or options
    - clear contact information for the airline's customer support team
    - links to government-published information on passenger rights relating to flight cancellations, delays, disruptions, denied boarding, and lost, delayed or damaged baggage.
- where a passenger reports that their baggage has been lost, delayed or damaged, provide information on:
    - any applicable support or assistance rights or options
    - any applicable reimbursement or compensation rights or options
    - clear contact information for the airline's customer support team
    - links to government-published information on passenger rights relating to flight cancellations, delays, disruptions, denied boarding, and lost, delayed or damaged baggage.

Commitment 4: Information about complaints and escalation

Passengers should be able to provide feedback, make complaints, and exercise their rights without concern that doing so will affect how they are treated. Communication between staff and passengers should be respectful and professional. This commitment is intended to ensure passengers know how to raise concerns and make complaints, including to relevant external bodies.

This commitment does not limit an airline's ability to communicate lawful consequences under its conditions of carriage, including in relation to disruptive behaviour or amounts owing.

Airlines should take reasonable steps, appropriate to their size and resources, to share information with passengers in a way that is:

- accurate, clear, and easy-to-understand, so passengers understand the steps involved in raising a concern or complaint
- accessible, including in formats that support passengers with accessibility needs
- easy to find, including on the airline's website and during check-in
- easy to use, with clear contact information for customer support.

Examples of the types of information that airlines should take reasonable steps to share include:

- how passengers can submit a complaint in the first instance
- if a passenger is unable to resolve an issue, how they can escalate a complaint
- links to government-published information on passenger rights relating to flight cancellations, delays, disruptions, denied boarding, and lost, delayed or damaged baggage.