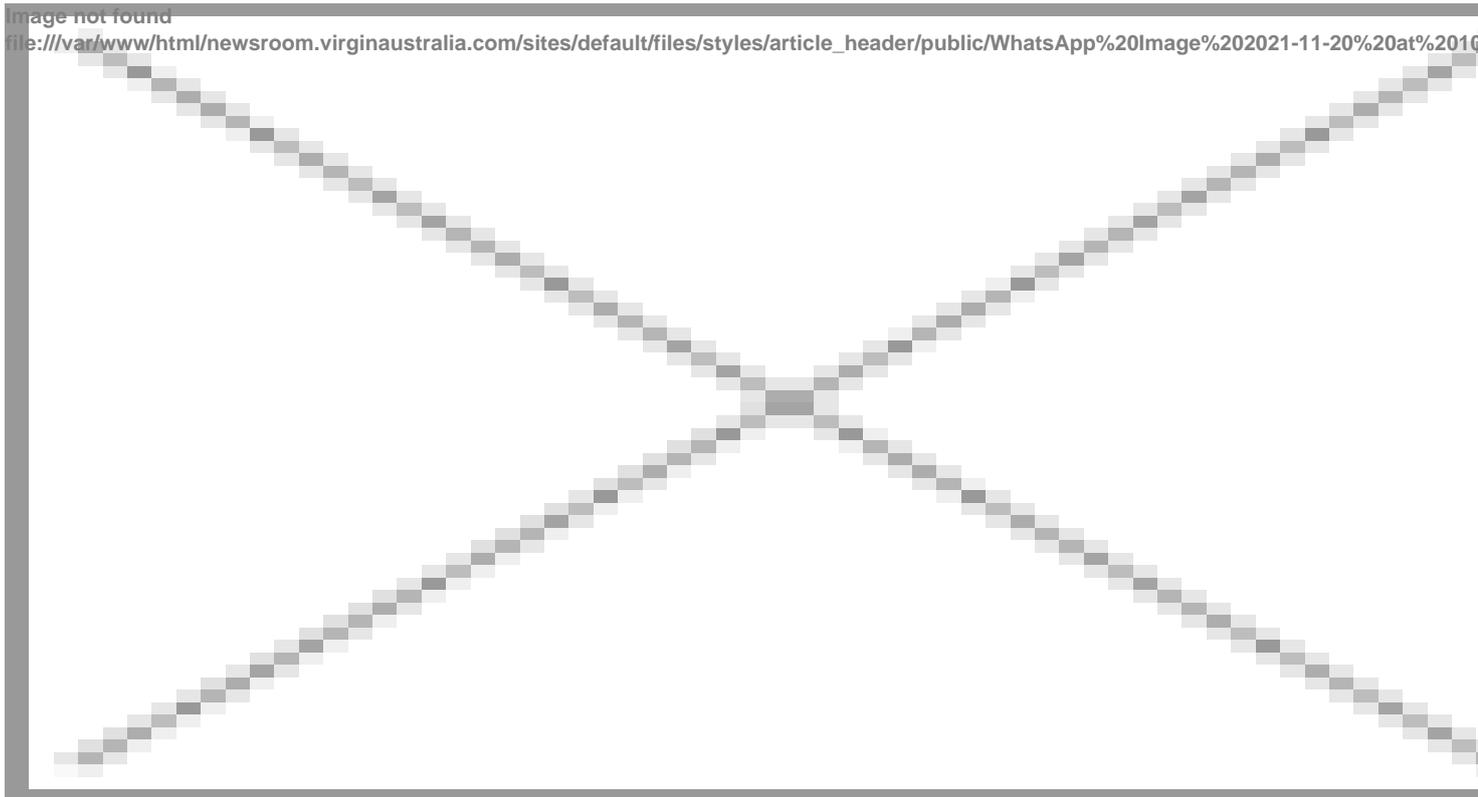




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Virgin Australia partners with Deadly Choices to help close the Vaccination Gap in Queensland ^[2]



- Virgin Australia will provide 400 free return economy flights on its domestic network to help encourage COVID-19 vaccination among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Virgin Australia will support the work of the Deadly Choices program, which is partnering with Community Controlled Health Services across Queensland.
- A number of events will be held over November and December to engage communities and facilitate vaccinations, featuring Deadly Choices Ambassadors and high-profile sporting stars.
- The first events commence this weekend with a Touch Carnival in Brisbane and a Community Day in Townsville.

Virgin Australia has announced it will provide 400 domestic return economy flights to the nationally recognised Deadly Choices program, as part of an initiative to help lift COVID-19 vaccination rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland ahead of border restrictions easing in December.

This enables Virgin Australia to support the work of Deadly Choices to close the gap in COVID-19 vaccination rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

Deadly Choices will partner with Community Controlled Health Services across Queensland to coordinate a number of fun local events for communities starting this weekend, and provide people with a chance to get vaccinated and meet some of Deadly Choices well-known ambassadors, as well as sporting stars from the North Queensland Cowboys, the Gold Coast Suns, the Brisbane Broncos and the Brisbane Lions, with support of the AFL and NRL.

The Virgin Australia flights, and a host of other prizes including sporting tickets and signed merchandise, will be on offer as prizes for people who get vaccinated on the day, or who are vaccinated and bring a family member or a friend to get the jab.

Virgin Australia CEO Jayne Hrdlicka said as a Queensland-based business, it takes its responsibility to the community seriously.

“The places we fly to, whether it’s Brisbane or regional centres like Mt Isa, Rockhampton and Townsville, are gateways for Indigenous families and it is important that we help support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be as well prepared as possible for the arrival of COVID-19,” Ms Hrdlicka said.

“Supporting communities across Virgin Australia’s flying network in Queensland is part of our commitment to safety.

“We’ve watched how successful Deadly Choices has been in supporting vaccination among Indigenous communities this year.

“We know one of the key motivations for people getting vaccinated is to be able to travel and reunite with family, especially as we approach the festive season.

“We intend to work collaboratively across the community to prepare for a safe opening of borders,” she said.

The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health CEO, Adrian Carson, said the partnership with Virgin Australia was timely and supported Deadly Choices’ number one priority, which is to close the gap in vaccination rates.

“With borders opening shortly we have a great concern of the potential impact that COVID-19 will have on our communities. An outbreak with current vaccination rates would see this virus spread quickly, placing those who are most vulnerable with underlying health conditions and our elders at great risk of serious illness or death,” Mr Carson said.

“These flights will provide the opportunity for those who have been vaccinated across our communities to reconnect with families and loved ones who have been unable to travel due to COVID-19 border closures and lockdowns. We are thankful for this generous offer from Virgin Australia, and even more so for each of our people who step up to protect themselves, their family and our communities.” he said.

Notes for Editors:

IUIH is Australia’s largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (CCHS),

established in 2009 as a regional strategic response to the significant growth and geographic dispersal of Indigenous people within South East Queensland (SEQ). IUIH leads a Network of CCHS across SEQ, Australia's largest and fastest-growing Indigenous region and home to 40% of Queensland's and 11% of Australia's Indigenous population. IUIH's flagship and nationally recognised Deadly Choices program has strong brand recognition/connectivity, values and utilises cultural identity, its partnerships with sporting codes and its Deadly Choices ambassadors to articulate what it means to make healthy and deadly choices.

Virgin Australia recently introduced a vaccination policy for frontline team members on the basis that vaccination is the best way to protect the health and safety of our workforce, guests and in turn the wider Australian community. Every Virgin Australia flight is now crewed by team members who have met the requirements of the airline's vaccination policy, and office-based team members will be required to be vaccinated from March 31.

Virgin Australia also launched its community-wide initiative to encourage COVID-19 vaccination, VA-X & Win in September, providing vaccinated Australians with the opportunity to win hundreds of prizes including one million Velocity Frequent Flyer Points. To date, nearly 300,000 people have entered.

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