

## Air NZ's shock Erebus admission

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By [Jane Phare](#)

Air New Zealand has acknowledged the "gaps and failings" after the Erebus tragedy 30 years ago.

In a letter sent last week to the families of the 257 victims killed when the Air New Zealand DC-10 crashed into Mt Erebus, chief executive Rob Fyfe said the airline had learned a lot since the tragedy and drew parallels with the Airbus accident at Perpignon last year.

"It was the experience of that accident and the feedback I received from Air New Zealanders who were with the airline at the time of the Erebus tragedy that caused me to reflect on many of the gaps and failings that occurred in the days, months and years after November 29, 1979," he said.

The current management team had an "acute understanding of personal tragedy and loss and the effect this has on families". The contrast between the airline's approach today and 30 years ago was noticed by many after the Perpignon crash which claimed seven lives, five from New Zealand.

Air New Zealand has stopped short of promising a public apology, expected to be given at an unveiling of a sculpture at the airline's head office on Friday.

An airline spokeswoman said the company had "no comment" to make about an apology but said Fyfe would talk about "lessons learned" from the Erebus accident and "the way in which the airline interacted with the families in the aftermath of the accident".

In his letter Fyfe said the airline had "agonised" over what to do to mark the 30th anniversary given the limited availability of seats on a flight to Antarctica.

Just five names will be drawn from a ballot – three representing the paying passengers, one representing the flight deck crew and one the cabin crew. The results of the ballot will be known this week.

Those five will visit Scott Base and the Erebus crash site to leave messages from loved ones back in New Zealand.

A service will also be held on the afternoon of November 28, at the Erebus Memorial Garden at Auckland's Waikumete Cemetery as well as two other services in Auckland and Christchurch on the same day.



Air New Zealand has admitted 'gaps and failings' over its response to the Erebus crash in 1979. Photo / One News