

[Back to previous page](#) | [Go to the national section](#)

# Air NZ to say sorry to Erebus victims' families

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*ONE News*

Air New Zealand plans to use the 30th anniversary of the Erebus disaster next month to apologise to the families of victims for the first time.

Two hundred and fifty-seven people died when the airline's DC-10 crashed into Mt Erebus in Antarctica during a sightseeing flight on November 28, 1979.

In a recent letter to victims' families, chief executive Rob Fyfe told them it was his involvement with the aftermath of the Airbus A320 crash off the Mediterranean coast on November 28 last year, in which four Air New Zealand staff died, which made him "reflect on many of the gaps and failings that occurred in the days, months and years after November 28, 1979".

Fyfe will make the apology at the unveiling of a sculpture at the airline's head office in Auckland next Friday, the Dominion Post reported.

It is understood he will not go as far as apologising for the accident itself or the subsequent controversial investigations.

Air New Zealand says Fyfe will "speak directly about the lessons learned from the Erebus tragedy and the way in which the airline interacted with the families in the aftermath of the accident".

Jackie Nankervis, who was 15 when she lost her father and uncle in the accident, says an apology would be "a step in the right direction".

Although financial compensation was paid, most families felt there had been a lack of communication and emotional support, she says.

These days, disaster victims received support, including counselling and constant communication. In 1979, there was nothing in place to meet the families' needs.

Air New Zealand's only direct contact with her family immediately after the accident was a bunch of flowers to her mother.

"The police did everything else."

Fyfe says the most important immediate response to Perpignan was to support the families of the victims and learn from the flight safety lessons. Laying blame was not helpful.

French investigators have indicated another report on the Perpignan crash could be made public before Christmas.

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