Territory Tourism enjoying a bumper season

Arrival and departure numbers at Territory airports are showing significant increases Chief Minister and Minister for Tourism, Clare Martin, said today.

Figures published by the Australian Infrastructure Fund - the operators of a number of Australian airports including Darwin and Alice Springs - highlight that visitor numbers are showing strong signs of rebounding with Darwin recording a 22.2% increase in the months of April/May 2004.

The May figures show that with international issues no longer dampening growth, international visitation is rebounding. For the two months of April and May, 2004, 35,000 international passengers travelled through Darwin Airport (up 7,600 passengers from April/May 2003) as well as 173,000 domestic passengers (up 30,100 passengers).

That is a jump of 27.6% in international travel and 21.1% in domestic travel over the same period in April/May 2003.

“In terms of where that places us over the past few years, international arrivals and departures are 4.8% more than in May 02 and 19.2% higher domestically,” she said.

Domestic figures for Alice Springs jumped 9.2% for those months.

Ms Martin said that, while SARS and the Iraq war were affecting travel in 2003, the 2004 results reflected increased airline capacity (from the start of Australian Airlines and Skywest flights and new Qantas and Virgin services), a boost in traveller confidence and more competitive fares.

Melbourne airport has seen a 45% international increase in May, and 15.4% domestic with much of that traffic spinning-off to the Territory.

These figures were supported by Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for April 2004 showing an international increase of over 25% from April 2003. That was the eighth consecutive month of growth.

One of the sectors showing the greatest growth is the Japanese market which is up 27.5%, a figure that will have certainly flowed-over to the Territory. There was also a 12.8% increase in visitors from the USA and small increases from Germany and the UK (key NT markets).

Ms Martin said that a number of sporting events, a record cruise ship season, strong numbers in the drive market and the tremendous success of The Ghan had also boosted visitor numbers.

“As of June 30, The Ghan has carried approximately 25,000 guests either to or from Darwin,” she said.

“And there appears to be little sign of these numbers slowing down with
approximately 20,000 guests already booked until the end of the year.”

Increases have also been reported by the taxi industry (Darwin Radio Taxis recording a 10% increase in passengers for May 2004 from 40,000 to 44,000), car rentals and hoteliers.

Tourism Top End, the regional peak industry body, reports a May increase of 22% in visitors coming through the door, with almost 2500 more people seeking tourism information than at the same time last year.

The season to date has been especially pleasing for Darwin harbour cruise boats. Amelia Doble, operator of the Spirit of Darwin says she is having his best year since buying the business.