TERRITORY MUST RECONNECT WITH INDONESIA

The decision by Garuda Indonesia to withdraw its Darwin to Denpasar service after 30 years of operation appears to have had negative spin-offs for Top End travellers.

Opposition Leader Terry Mills said a return Jetstar ticket from Darwin to Bali cost $240 leading-up to Garuda’s decision last week to scrap flights.

An on-line search has shown that in the post Garuda era, passengers looking to travel from Darwin to Denpasar and back will have to pay between $340 and $500 for a return ticket.

“While it’s impossible to say exactly that these higher fares are as a result Garuda’s departure, it was to the advantage of Territory travellers that there was competition for the major airlines,” Mr Mills said.

“It should be noted that the Government’s pursuit – with fistfuls of taxpayer dollars in hand – of Tiger and Jetstar to the Territory have coincided with the departure of Royal Brunei and now Garuda from Territory skies.

“Yesterday I spoke with Sofyan Bjalil, the Indonesian Minister for State Owned Companies, to express my regret at the airline’s departure from Darwin.

“It follows Merpati Air’s withdrawal a few years ago, and reflects what I believe is a regrettable cooling in the relationship between Indonesia and the Territory.
“Before 2001, successive Territory chief ministers worked hard to build linkages between Darwin and Jakarta.

“Student exchanges, sporting events and trade delegations combined to form a comprehensive strategy that helped carve a place for the Territory in Indonesia.

“It’s not hard to argue that the decision to close the Garuda office was greatly assisted by the drift from the Territory’s original Asian Relations and Trade strategy.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594