14 September 2010

Minister courts Etihad Airways in Abu Dhabi

Tourism Minister, Malarndirri McCarthy today met with Etihad Airways CEO James Hogan and other senior Etihad executives in Abu Dhabi to pursue opportunities to jointly market the Northern Territory in the UK and Europe by leveraging Etihad’s significant airline links.

Minister McCarthy said that Etihad is one of the world’s fastest growing premium airlines.

“In discussions with Mr Hogan we outlined a case for a full-service connection into Darwin highlighting the strength of the Territory economy and unique mix of culture and nature. I also highlighted the need to offer Territorians more choice with airline services,” Ms McCarthy said.

“I also explored opportunities arising from Etihad’s recent announcement of a major push with Virgin Blue. Virgin Blue already operates flights from Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane to Darwin and Sydney to Ayers Rock (Uluru).

“Etihad is exploring opportunities for other destinations in the Northern Territory in the future.

“Capitalising on the number of domestic flights that connect with international flights and promoting these connections is vital for inbound tourism.

“In 2009-10 visitors coming from the UK to Australia flying Etihad numbered 28,100 and Etihad flew 10,500 visitors from Germany to Australia.

“With so many Etihad passengers coming to Australia, the Territory Government wants to capitalise on these premium and high-value travellers.

“The Territory Government has allocated $2.1 million in Budget 2010 towards improving airline access from key source markets through cooperative marketing and route development, and it is a key action in the Government’s Aviation Futures 2015 strategy.

“Working with major airlines to improve schedules, entering into code-share marketing and interline agreements, and promoting these through a range of travel distribution channels is part of this strategy.

“In June 2010, a successful campaign was run targeting the youth to 50s market in the greater Manchester area, the United Kingdom’s second largest international region outside London.

“The campaign promoted Etihad flights to Australia with links to the Northern Territory,” Ms McCarthy said.

Etihad already operates successful routes to Australia from Germany (Frankfurt and Munich) and the UK and Ireland (London, Manchester and Dublin).

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