Chief Minister Adam Giles and Tourism Minister Matt Conlan today met with senior Japan Airlines executives to discuss ways the Northern Territory Government could work in partnership to open up Japanese tourism opportunities in the Territory.

The meeting coincided with the Australia Japan Business Cooperation Committee (AJBCC) arrangements in Tokyo.

“Japan is the Northern Territory’s fourth largest tourist market with approximately 28,000 Japanese tourists visiting the Territory each year,” Mr Giles said.

“At present the vast majority of Japanese tourists only visit the Red Centre destinations of Alice Springs and Uluru.

“Places such as the Top End’s world heritage-listed Kakadu National Park with its wetlands and Aboriginal rock art, or Litchfield National Park’s waterfalls are rarely visited by Japanese tourists.

“Many Territory regions and places are spectacular, providing an even more memorable cultural experience to most visitors.”

A major issue that makes it difficult to offer Japanese visitors a complete Territory experience is existing airline schedules.

“At present, the Territory is essentially an out-of-the-way destination when Japanese travel agents are preparing Australian holiday itineraries,” Mr Conlan said.

“Japan Airlines have expressed an interest in working with the Northern Territory Government, and their code share partner QANTAS, to develop new airline routes that link up Darwin, Alice Springs and other destinations in Australia.

“A first step is to investigate dedicated charter flights to test and develop the market in advance of establishing regular passenger services.

“When Darwin hosts the next AJBCC meeting in 2014, it will provide an excellent opportunity for instigating such a passenger service. This would allow visiting delegates and their families to stay in the Territory to experience all that it has to offer.

“By establishing airline routes and schedules that include the NT as a natural extension to any Australian holiday itinerary, it will generate greater numbers of Japanese tourists being able to enjoy a Territorian experience during their Australian holiday.”

Media Contact:
Ron Kelly 0408 906 173