Charter flights a clear priority

Increasing international air access from the Northern Territory’s major tourism markets was a Government priority, Tourism Minister Dr Chris Burns said today.

Commenting on media statements suggesting that the NT Government should consider introducing charter planes from China, Dr Burns pointed out that the major boost of $27.5 million in funding for tourism announced last week contained nearly $3 million specifically for charter flight marketing and marketing in Asia with airline partners.

"We have proved that charter flights can be very successful in operating from developed and mature markets like Japan. In fact a second program of charters to Central Australia will operate between 23 November and 8 December 2003, following a successful trial in August," Minister Burns said.

"What needs to be understood is that there are major differences between the Chinese and the Japanese tourism markets, and our marketing approach to each market also differs."

"The Japanese market is very familiar with the Northern Territory, and are particularly attracted to Central Australia to see Ayers Rock/Uluru, which is an internationally recognised icon. In comparison, China is very much an emerging market and our focus is on increasing retailer and wholesalers’ knowledge about the Territory’s tourism experiences".

"To increase China’s awareness, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission (NTTC) is working with the Australian Tourist Commission to bring Chinese media to the Northern Territory to increase media coverage of the Territory as a holiday destination.

"Also, in early November, the NTTC will take part in the 7th China Trade Mission, in Shenzhen where it will launch its newly developed "Blue Book" travel brochures, translated in both simplified and traditional Chinese, to educate travel agents and media about the unique product of the Territory."

Dr Burns said that it is important that the Government invests its dollars in those markets which provide the greatest potential for return and at present China provides less than 1,000 visitors each year to the Northern Territory.

While we will continue to work on charter programs, it is important to remember than the real aim is to increase scheduled services from our existing major tourism destinations while we continue to grow new markets," Minister Burns said.