



SKYTRANS KARUMBA ANNOUNCEMENT

24th July 2008

Skytrans today announced that it will regrettably be forced to cease flying to Karumba as of Monday 1st September 2008.

The announcement comes after the existing fleet of aircraft which flew to Karumba were retired and a massive national and international pilot shortage took its inevitable toll on the regional airline.

The existing piston fleet which Skytrans traditionally flew into Karumba were approaching the end of their economical lifespan – which prompted a decision to expand the business through the acquisition of a larger aircraft type, allowing for a higher quality of comfort and service; as well as a greater capacity for air travel to the communities in Far North Queensland.

Also as a direct result of both national and international demand for airline pilots; general and regional aviation operators have experienced the loss of experienced crews at unprecedented levels to the larger airlines.

“In consideration of this reality, both current and previous owners of Skytrans recognised that in order for the business to continue to prosper, an upgrade in aircraft type and modification to the business model was required to adapt to the forthcoming economic climate and coincidental pilot shortage,” said Chief Executive Officer of Skytrans Simon Wild.

“With these two major factors in mind, the Dash 8 aircraft was selected as the most qualified replacement, facilitating in flight service, entertainment and the capacity for thirty-six seats per flight,” he said.

Over the last eighteen months, Skytrans has been working closely with the Coen, Lockhart River, and Palm Island communities to successfully upgrade their aerodromes in order for them to be acceptable for Dash 8 operation and these efforts have been successful in these areas, but unfortunately, the Karumba aerodrome does not possess the minimum safety standards nor the physical ability to support a Dash 8 service.

“Skytrans conducted an extensive search for a smaller aircraft type to replace those currently operating the Karumba scheduled service but has been unsuccessful in locating any. The unavoidable and unfortunate end result is that Skytrans can no longer continue to operate the smaller aircraft to Karumba, as either the existing crew have advanced in their careers or the older aircraft have been disposed of,” Mr Wild said.

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“All of our key clientele have been made aware of the announcement and while they are sad, they understand the position we have been put in. The significance of the national crew shortage is indicated by the ongoing cancellation of services and routes by other major carriers and regional airlines over the last twelve months. There are some very real challenges out there for the aviation industry to deal with at present,” he said.

“We are committed to our passengers in the quality of service that we provide to the region; and I feel that the introduction of the Dash 8 to Cape York is a large step forward in the realisation of only the most comfortable and reliable air travel to our local communities. It is my hope that one day the aerodrome of Karumba will be upgraded to cater for improved services such as these as the community deserves nothing less,” he said.

“I understand the impact that this change will have on the people of Karumba and the businesses associated with this community and it brings us all a deep sense of sadness to have to move down this path. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their support to Skytrans over the past few years and I can promise them that Skytrans will of course continue to support the communities of Far North Queensland.”

For further information or to arrange media interviews contact:

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