



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Airnorth celebrates 35 years of flight

This year marks the 35th anniversary for Airnorth, Northern Australia's premier airline. As the second longest operating airline in Australia (after Qantas), Airnorth commenced operations on 04 July 1978, coincidentally in the first week of self-government of the Northern Territory.

In its early years, Airnorth operated a fleet of single and twin engine Cessna chartered aircraft throughout the NT, as well as internationally to Indonesia. In 1981, Airnorth purchased the NT's first turbine-engine aircraft, a Beechcraft Super King Air 200, introducing higher standards of comfort, speed and safety to air travel in the NT.

The 1980's also saw Airnorth purchase its first airliner, a Douglas DC-3. Along with its existing charter flights, the airline expanded to offer Regular Public Transport (RPT) services across the NT and by the end of the decade had established itself as the major aircraft operator in Northern Australia, with a fleet of 44 aircraft.

Several major developments in the 1990s further cemented Airnorth's position as the leading aviation company in the Top End. This included the establishment of Capiteq Limited in 1993 (Airnorth's current owners) when the Skyport Group bought into the business; the introduction of turbo-prop aircraft into its fleet including the Fairchild Metro 23 (in 1995) and Embraer 120 Brasilia (in 1997); and the introduction of Airnorth as the first commercial airline to operate services into East Timor after the country's independence in 1999 and still operating fifteen years later.

Over the past three and a half decades Airnorth has developed many long term and successful partnerships with some of the world's largest and most respected mining and resource companies. It was Airnorth's partnership with McArthur River Mine (Xstrata Zinc) in 2006 that played an integral part in the introduction of the 76 seat, Embraer 170 Jet aircraft into Airnorth's fleet.

Airnorth's Chief Executive Officer, Michael Bridge said, "The key to success was the collaborative approach to the contract. It was a win-win for both companies – it provided the passenger capacity needed by the mine at an efficient cost, while allowing Airnorth to leverage the contract for growth."

"The introduction of the jet into our fleet in 2007 has transformed our business. Every market we have put that jet into has grown overnight and we now operate four E170 jets across our network," said Mr Bridge.

Airnorth now operate the world's most sophisticated regional jet aircraft into some of the world's most challenging environments. Currently the airline carries over 300,000 passengers annually; employs over 220 staff in Darwin and directly contracts a similar number across their network of ports.



Airnorth operates over 185 departures weekly to 17 destinations in three Australian States/Territories and across three countries. These destinations include Darwin, Groote Eylandt, Gove, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Elcho Island and McArthur River in the NT; Kununurra, Broome, Karratha, Port Hedland and Perth in Western Australia; Townsville, Mt Isa and the Gold Coast in Queensland; and internationally to Dili in Timor-Leste and to Manilla in the Philippines.

Airnorth plan to celebrate their milestone birthday with several initiatives and events over the coming 12 months. The first of these will be a birthday sale for passengers, where 350 Airnorth airfares at \$35 each including taxes, will be released for routes across their network. The sale will commence at midday 23 July and available for online bookings only via [www.airnorth.com.au](http://www.airnorth.com.au).

Other initiatives include the development of their 35 Year logo, a look back at the last 3.5 decades of Airnorth history in the form of a beautiful coffee table book and more.

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For more information contact:

Tammy Baczynski

**Marketing & Communications Manager**

Ph: +61 8 8920 4058 | Mob: 0439 234 058

[tammy.baczynski@airnorth.com.au](mailto:tammy.baczynski@airnorth.com.au)

### ***Company background***

Headquartered in Darwin, Airnorth is now the premier airline based in Northern Australia and carries in excess of 300,000 passengers annually.

Airnorth is a full service carrier accommodating the needs of both business and leisure travellers, operating state-of-art regional jets through its interstate and international network and providing passengers with complimentary catering and a free baggage allowance.

Passengers can also earn and redeem Qantas Frequent Flyer points on all Airnorth scheduled services.

Airnorth, through its partnership with Qantas Airways, offer seamless connectivity including through check in and interline baggage facilities, with Qantas code sharing on the majority of Airnorth's Jet services.

In addition to scheduled departures, Airnorth operates contract and ad-hoc charter services for a wide variety of companies undertaking oil & gas, mining, defence and government activity.

Airnorth directly employs more than 200 staff in Darwin and provides indirect employment through the contracting of ground service operations across its destinations.

Airnorth was awarded as the winner of the **2012 Large Services Award** at the Northern Territory's Chief Minister's Export and Industry Awards that recognise the important contribution that NT businesses make to the local economy through job creation and increased prosperity in the community.

