

MEDIA RELEASE

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Page 1 of 2

CRUCIAL JAPAN LINKS OPENED

Showing confidence in tough economic times, Continental Micronesia has announced an additional 9000 seats into Tropical North Queensland.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive officer Rob Giason yesterday welcomed the new weekly flights from Japan to Cairns as a vital link for the city's largest market.

Continental Micronesia has announced six additional flights from Guam into Cairns during March and two additional weekly flights from April to September 2009.

The international airline serves eight major cities in Japan and already carries visitors from Japan into Tropical North Queensland through its Guam hub with demand for flights surging since the demise of Qantas' service.

More than 100,000 seats were lost when Qantas cut flights between Cairns and Japan late last year.

Mr Giason said Japan was Tropical North Queensland's biggest international market with 178,000 visitors spending a million nights in the region in the year to September 30, 2008.

"Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef have strong brand value in Japan, so it is crucial that we continue to look for new ways to replace the lost seat capacity and encourage more Japanese to fly into Cairns," he said.

The announcement follows ongoing discussions between the State and Federal Governments, Tourism Tropical North Queensland and the airline as part of the multi-million dollar tourism rescue package.

Mr Giason said the Federal Government's support for marketing the Continental Micronesia services would help further develop the route into Tropical North Queensland from Japan through Guam and build



on Continental Micronesia's established network in Japan.

"Continental Micronesia is a well-established brand in Japan and the marketing assistance to be provided through Tourism Australia and Tourism Queensland will keep the Tropical North front of mind among travel agents and consumers," he said.

Mr Giason said the flights also could help the region develop new markets, especially the lucrative US military recreation leave market.

"The United States is increasing its military presence in Guam to 25,000 by 2013 so this deal will give us new opportunities to tap into that as well as servicing the Japanese market," he said.

Mr Giason said Jetstar's new service from the Gold Coast to Cairns started this week and would further support Japan connections.

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