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Office of the
Spokesperson

Press Release

Government signs agreement with Airnorth to ensure continued air services connectivity

The Government of Timor-Leste, through the Minister of Transport and Communications José Agostinho da Silva, on Tuesday, 7 April signed an agreement with Airnorth that will allow for air services to continue between Dili and Darwin. The agreement was recently approved by the Council of Ministers according to the Government Spokesperson, Minister of State of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers Agio Pereira.

Under the agreement, Airnorth will operate three flights per week between Dili and Darwin for the transport of medical supplies, medical emergencies, and the provision of essential goods and services. The services will commence in the coming week, with the date of first flight to be this Friday, 10th of April.

The COVID-19 crisis is having an unprecedented impact on airlines around the world. In recent weeks, several service providers, including Airnorth and Air Timor, announced the cessation of services in and out of Dili. This was in response to widescale travel restrictions enacted to slow the spread of COVID-19, such as transit and quarantine restrictions imposed by the Singaporean Government. A cessation of all air services now leaves Timor-Leste isolated, without global connectivity for the movement of freight, medical supplies or passengers in emergencies.

The agreement signed between the Government of Timor-Leste and Airnorth ensures continued air connectivity for Timor-Leste. Once the global COVID-19 crisis has stabilised, the parties anticipate a smooth transition to the provision of regular passenger services. In the interim, Airnorth's services will largely be for the transport of freight and emergency medical supplies.



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Minister Agio Pereira said: “There is nothing more important than the health and safety of our people.”

“As we all know, the outbreak of COVID-19 has been declared a public health emergency of international concern and is impacting countries around the world.”

“The Government of Timor-Leste is taking concrete steps to protect the Timorese people and secure the safety of our nation.”

Minister José Agostinho da Silva stated that “it is the responsibility of our Government to maintain an air transit route to ensure we can continue to bring in supplies to assist us in dealing with the challenges arising out of the COVID-19 virus.”

Minister Agio Pereira added: “The Government has been working to secure a swift and cost-efficient air connectivity solution. Despite Airnorth cutting its services to many locations due to the impact of COVID-19, the airline has agreed to continue three services to Dili per week under this partnership.

“This initiative will also be important for our businesses that rely heavily on air connections for freight.”

“We thank Airnorth for its ongoing support and the flexibility shown by its CEO Daniel Bowden, who led the negotiation process personally. We have been well advised by Stephen Webb and his aviation team at DLA Piper to ensure this arrangement has been put in place as quickly and cost effectively as possible, and as a gesture to our people this has been provided on a pro bono basis.”

Minister Pereira also stated that, “On behalf of the people of Timor-Leste, I want to acknowledge the bravery and hard work of our health care workers during this crisis. I also would like to recognise the



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support of the Australian Government in facilitating medical testing in Darwin, and the Airnorth workers who will continue operating the service during these challenging times.” **ENDS**



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