AIRNORTH PILOT MAKES HISTORY WITH FIRST FLIGHT TO HIS OLD HOME TOWN

News / Airlines



It was a proud moment for Darwin pilot Dean Ham as he landed the first passenger jet from the Northern Territory at Australia's newest airport in Toowoomba, South-East Queensland, on Friday.

The historic Airnorth flight preceded the start of direct services from Toowoomba to Melbourneon Monday and Toowoomba to Cairns services on Tuesday.

Melbourne becomes the 25th destination for Airnorth and the first foray into southern Australia.

It also marks a return home for Dean, who packed his bags in Melbourne, nearly 20 years ago, as a 22 year old and headed north to Darwin in search of a career in aviation.

The fledgling pilot started out in aircraft cleaning and ramp operations before transitioning into flying roles and then working his way up the Airnorth ranks over the past 18 years.

Today, Dean is Airnorth's general manager flight operations (head of flying operations) leading a team of 70 professional pilots in the company's 270-strong workforce.

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“It has been an amazing experience to see the company expand right across Northern Australia and now to be part of the first flight into Victoria,” Dean said.

“Airnorth has always looked after its people. It likes to recruit locally and give its employees the chance to grow.”

Dean was joined on the inaugural flight to Melbourne by Airnorth CEO Daniel Bowden and more than 40 passengers and guests, including four new cabin crew employed out of Toowoomba.

“This is an important milestone for our business and for regional Australia,” Bowden said.

“As Australia’s second longest operating airline, we know that quality air services are critical for building communities and bringing them closer to domestic and international markets.



VH-ANT departs Wellcamp for Melbourne on Monday. (Lenn Bayliss)

Airnorth will operate seven weekly return flights to Melbourne and three weekly flights to Cairns from Toowoomba’s new Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport.

Extended codeshare arrangements with Qantas will give passengers access to a range of benefits including bookings via the Qantas website and access to frequent flyer rewards.

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VH-ANT on approach into Melbourne on Monday. (William Reid)

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