

Marlins net Skytrans

Team flies high amid expansion

SCOTT FORBES

SKYTRANS is well and truly back in business.

The company has debuted its intra-Cape flight services and also landed a brand new basketball sponsorship deal.

This time they're helping the Marlins take flight.

"We've had a relationship with Skytrans for the last six years and their new ownership arrangement created an opportunity for them to have a larger role within the organisation," Cairns Basketball general manager Mike Scott said.

"The certainty of having a naming rights sponsor like Skytrans, which is also a transport partner, gives us some financial stability to enable us to recruit players with comfort as well as compete in the Queensland basketball league competitively."

It's part of Skytrans' new strategy expanding in the Cape and offering intra-Cape flight services.

Starting from May 4, an improved intra-Cape schedule will provide passengers with direct flights to destinations around the Cape removing the need to fly in and out of Cairns as the existing "Hub and Spoke Service" operates.

The restructure will provide 55 flight sectors weekly from Monday to Friday.

"This is a really exciting time for us at Skytrans and for the Cape community to have their own dedicated interconnecting service," commercial manager Michael Thinee said.

"We are proud to be breaking some new records by being the first RPT service in history to provide the Cape with an interconnecting service, and also surpassing previous Skytrans schedules with a record number of services in northern Queensland. We have bought



NICE BOUNCE: The Marlins' Nathan Sobey is one team member happy with the Skytrans naming rights deal.

Picture: ANNA ROGERS

online a second \$5 million dollar Dash-8 Aircraft to be able to service the extensive schedule.

"The service will include cabin crew, refreshments and an integrated cargo service.

"We expect that passengers can be at their destination from 20 minutes to two hours, as opposed to current services taking on average five hours.

"The new services will also

open up commerce lanes for the community such as decreasing the mortality rate for the live lobster export market," Mr Thinee said.

Two destinations, Weipa and Horn Island, have been added to the existing list which includes Aurukun, Bamaga, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama, Lockhart River and Coen.

Embattled Skytrans got

back in the air after NRL star Johnathan Thurston teamed up with Townsville-based aviation entrepreneur Peter Collings to purchase the airline.

Two of the company's aircraft, including a 36-seater Dash-8, returned to the air at the start of the month.

Former Skytrans managing director Simon Wild made the difficult decision to put his

family company into voluntary administration last year in order to have the resources to pay his staff their entitlements.

The falling Australian dollar and loss of government contracts to service the Cape crippled their bottom line.

Skytrans will compete with Regional Express (Rex) for some Cape routes including between Cairns and Bamaga.