

18 March 2013 **Domestic flights to the tourism destinations in the outer islands of the Kingdom especially Vava'u and Ha'apai continue after the departure of Chatham Airline earlier this month.**



The Minister for Commerce, Tourism and Labour, Dr. Viliami Latu, stated that "A significant percentage of tourists visiting the Kingdom are destined to the outer islands and the quality of their experiences in Tonga is based on the variety of activities available within these locations."

The withdrawal of Chatham Airlines in early March and the manner they exited had raised some uncertainty in the local market as well as in the international tourist market over the status of the domestic airline industry in Tonga. It is recognized that restoring confidence to the industry requires the assurance of all travelling customers that the new domestic airline is safe and reliable. The new domestic airline, 'Real Tonga', has therefore been subjected to the normal regulatory due diligence to ensure safe, more affordable, frequent and undisrupted flights for all the travelling public including tourists to the Kingdom.

Real Tonga Airlines, upon Government issuance of the required certification, effectively took up the sole domestic airline responsibility immediately after the Chatham Airlines exited. The air certification granted guarantees that the airline operations have met international aviation

standards including international safety requirements established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The airline is also an IATA registered company which reflects stronger commitment of the new airline to ensuring that customer demand and satisfaction are met.

The Real Tonga flight schedule includes flights to all island groups and at least two daily flights from Monday to Saturday to key island groups. Bookings can also be done online at the Real Tonga website www.realtonga.to.

The Ministry CEO Tatafu Moeaki further stated that 'building on the stronger visitor arrivals in 2012 and the Ministry's stepped-up destination marketing of the Kingdom since 2012, the continuity of reliable and affordable domestic airline services will help the Ministry's growth strategy for Tonga's tourism and the multiple benefits to the economy".

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Issued by the: Ministry of Commerce, Tourism and Labour, Nuku'alofa, 2013. Press Release 14 March 2013.