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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Cairns 20 August 2010**

**GBR HELICOPTER GROUP SELLS TO LOCAL INTERESTS**



**Pictured at the handover of GBR Helicopter Group are L-R:  
New owners Ian Johnson and Chris Cooper, and previous owners Deborah Ross and Chris Rose.**

Leading North Queensland helicopter company, GBR Helicopter Group has been sold to locals who are already involved in the business. Retiring director Deborah Ross said she and partner Chris Rose have been in negotiations with the buyers for some time.

“The sale was structured as a phased takeover which is in the best interests of GBR Helicopter Group’s future growth and is the most positive outcome for our current employees, customers and reef partners,” said Deborah Ross. “We are delighted to be passing the baton to two people who share our passion and vision, and who have the strength and energy to inspire, motivate and continue to grow GBR as the most respected and successful tourism businesses in the region. GBR has been many years in the making and we are convinced that we have taken the necessary steps to secure its future for many years to come,” she said.

In the newly announced company structure effective from Monday 16 August, incoming owners Chris Cooper and Ian Johnson are joint Managing Directors of GBR Helicopter Group. Chris Rose will remain with the group as Senior Pilot, maintaining valuable piloting skills for the business and mentoring up-and-coming pilots.

Chris Cooper joined GBR as a pilot three years ago and two years ago took on the senior aviation role of Chief Pilot for the company. He is also a grade one instructor. He previously worked in the IT industry as a Services Delivery Manager for Logica, rolling out multi-million dollar projects for companies such as Anglian Water in the UK and Sydney Water in Australia.

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Ian Johnson started his career in sales and marketing, moved into the world of film and television and was Managing Director of Real to Reel Productions Ltd – a London based independent production company producing high end corporate video, documentaries and commercials. He has also produced one British feature film.

GBR Helicopter Group had its inception 15 years ago when Chris Rose and Deborah Ross started the fledgling tourism helicopter business with one helicopter. Chris's grandfather set up the first commercial helicopter operation in Far North Queensland 50 years ago with a business named Jayrow Helicopters.

Deborah's career began in the hospitality sector working with companies such as the Flag Group, Tourist Hotel Corporation NZ, Inter-Continental Hotels and ITT Sheraton before moving into helicopters in 1989. Deborah has been an integral player in the conception and implementation of helicopter tourism in the North Queensland region, and was the first person in Australia to have helicopter flights included in international wholesale programs after taking helicopter tourism to Australian Tourism Exchange in the early 1990s.

GBR Helicopter Group today employs a staff of 45 including 12 pilots and operates a fleet of eight aircraft, three boats and a dozen cars. The company's head office is located at Cairns Airport. They also have exclusive operations at both the GBR-Cairns City Helipad at the Shangri-La Marina in Cairns and at the GBR-Sheraton Helipad in Port Douglas. The GBR maintenance facility is located at another building within general aviation at Cairns airport.

GBR Helicopter Group is the exclusive provider of helicopter services to all the fixed reef platforms on the Great Barrier Reef operated by their strategic partners Great Adventures and Green Island, Quicksilver Cruises, Reef Magic and Sunlover Cruises. Through this aspect of their operation servicing six floating platforms, they have the distinction of the most single engine off shore landings in the world per annum.

Through their commercial operations, GBR Helicopters provides helicopter services to a wide range of companies including Ergon Energy, Telstra, Queensland Parks and Wildlife, DERM and a variety of mining companies. They are also contracted to provide daytime and nighttime helicopter transfer services for cargo ships navigating through the Great Barrier Reef - landing on the moving ships to pick up and drop off marine pilots.

GBR Helicopters was the first operator to capture professional quality aerial film footage of Migaloo the famous white whale on his annual Great Barrier Reef journey only last week, when they flew over the marine mammal as it played off Green Island, near Cairns. As a film pilot, Chris Rose is world renowned as an aerial filming specialist and has worked repeatedly for major productions such as Survivor, Sea Change, Australia (the movie), I'm a Celebrity- Get me Out of Here, and The Amazing Race.

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