
Lauren Moss
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture



Media Release

Great Air Race Centenary: Michael Smith Recreates History in Darwin

10 December 2019

Darwin celebrates its significant place in aviation history today in welcoming internationally recognised adventurer, Michael Smith to Darwin International Airport as he concludes his Great Air Race commemorative flight from London to Darwin.

One hundred years ago, the Great Air Race story captured the hearts and minds of people all around the world, and this historical event has been reignited through the commemorative program of events the Territory Labor Government has funded this year.

Mr Smith has flown a modern-day retracing of the original Great Air Race flight path, taking into consideration geopolitical changes since the original flight in 1919.

His SeaBear aircraft, the Southern Sun, left London on 19 November and has travelled across 20 countries before arriving in Darwin today at 3:45pm – 100 years after the original Great Air Race touched down in the Top End.

The 1919 Great Air Race journey won by pilots, Ross and Keith Smith and mechanics, Wally Sheirs and Jim Bennett, changed the possibilities of international air travel and communication to and from Australia, completing the journey in 28 days and becoming the first crew to fly from England to Australia.

The plane was carrying what would become the first ever mail to be delivered to Australia by air, and to recreate this significant milestone, Mr Smith has travelled with commemorative mail on board from England. Upon his arrival today, Australia Post will stamp the mail with a Great Air Race centenary commemorative post mark.

The public is encouraged to visit Darwin International Airport and view Mr Smith's commemorative landing scheduled for 3:45pm today.

Tomorrow, the final event in the Great Air Race Centenary program, *In Conversation with Michael Smith*, will be held at the Darwin Entertainment Centre.

He will discuss his journey and how much the world and the aviation industry has changed since the Great Air Race 100 years ago. Tickets are available from the Darwin Entertainment Centre and NTIX website.

For an overview of the Great Air Race Centenary program, please visit <https://www.greatairrace.com.au/>.

Quotes from the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture, Lauren Moss:

“The Great Air Race Centenary celebrations are putting Darwin and the Northern Territory at the centre of aviation history in this country and globally, reinforcing the innovative spirit that still exists today, one hundred years on.

“It’s very exciting to have Michael Smith recreating the original Great Air Race flight as part of the centenary celebrations.

“History buffs and proud Territorians love celebrating and sharing this story - the first major international feat of significance following World War I which inspired the globe, kick started international commercial air travel and put Darwin on the map.

“The Northern Territory Government is supporting this momentous historical event through our turbocharging tourism investment, to promote the range of attractions on offer, and our significant place in world and aviation history.”

Quotes from Adventurer, Michael Smith:

“I’m very excited to be landing in Darwin to complete my commemorative flight in honour of the Great Air Race.

“It has been an incredible journey of delights and challenges following in the footsteps of the Great Air Race aviators and experiencing what their flight might have been like.

“So much has changed over a century, yet in many ways, they enjoyed freedoms back then foreign to us now. What hasn’t changed is the universal warmth shown to travellers by people across each country.”

Quotes from Darwin International Airport Chief Executive Officer, Ian Kew:

“The Great Air Race is an extremely important part of Darwin and aviation history and it is fantastic to be able to celebrate its centenary at the Darwin International Airport.

“We are excited to welcome Michael Smith to Darwin at the conclusion of his commemorative flight.”

Quotes from Operations Manager QLD, SA & NT of Australia Post, Andrew Lowe:

“We’re thrilled to be commemorating this event in Darwin along the rest of the Territory community.

“This is an amazing historical event which changed how Australia connected to the world. This was the first occasion that mail had reached Australia from

overseas by air which significantly changed the way people communicated.”

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