

Gold city a FIFO hub for Tropicana

GOLDFIELDS Air Services has celebrated winning a five-year contract with the Tropicana gold mine by landing on the site's brand new sealed airstrip.

Tropicana – a joint venture between AngloGold Ashanti Australia (70 per cent and manager) and Independence Group (30 per cent) – is in construction and on schedule to pour first gold in the December quarter next year.

Goldfields Air Services was the first aviation company to land at Tropicana, 330km east-north-east of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, after the discovery was made in 2005 and the new contract will see it upgrade its fleet.

GAS managing director Dougal McQuie said the contract would underpin the company's growth.

“The added benefit of this contract is it is with a service-focused local business that understands our needs.”

– DUNCAN GIBBS

“It gives us the confidence to move into more modern and sophisticated aircraft and provide for increased demand within the region and, in particular, from AngloGold Ashanti Australia,” Mr McQuie said.

“It is a big investment in our future.”

The Tropicana contract will involve



Historic flight: Goldfields Air Services managing director Dougal McQuie with Tropicana registered manager Alan Astle and chief pilot Geoff Horsley. Photo: FRANCES THORNTON

at least two flights a week to Tropicana to enable Kalgoorlie-Boulder-based employees to work at the mine on a fly-in, fly-out basis.

This frequency may increase once the project is closer to production.

GAS is also running one flight a

week out of Kalgoorlie-Boulder to AngloGold Ashanti Australia's Sunrise Dam gold mine.

GAS will use King Air B200 aircraft for the Tropicana flights.

It has updated two planes in its fleet and is in the process of accessing a

third plane.

The company is retaining the medivac capabilities of one of the King Airs, which was acquired from the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Tropicana general manager Duncan Gibbs said GAS had a strong rela-

tionship with AngloGold after servicing the project from early greenfields exploration – when there was just a dirt strip at the site – through to development.

He said the company's ability to meet AngloGold Ashanti's rigorous aviation standards and its willingness to provide the type of aircraft necessary to service Tropicana had been influential in GAS winning the new contract.

“The added benefit of this contract is it is with a service-focused local business that understands our needs,” Mr Gibbs said.

The contract forms an important part of the Tropicana joint venture's commitment to engaging local and indigenous contractors and employees.

The new sealed, all-weather airstrip at Tropicana is just over 2km long and designed to cater for 100-seater jets, which will provide FIFO access for Perth-based employees.

GAS was formed in 1982 by David Horsley, whose son Geoff took over in 1996.

Mr McQuie recently acquired the company and Mr Horsley remains part of the team as chief pilot.

Mr Horsley landed the King Air on the new strip, but he was also the pilot who landed the first plane – a Cessna – at Tropicana on August 8, 2006.

GAS initially flew single-engined Cessna 210s and then upgraded to a twin-engine Cessna fleet.

It also operates a flying school out of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Airport.

Look, lock and think twice

Have your say . . . www.kalminer.com.au or news@kalminer.com.au