

Weddings feeling brunt

THE Cairns company which specialises in weddings for Japanese couples says the lucrative market is being choked by lack of flights.

South Pacific Bridal Cairns managing director Phillip Ford has just returned from a self-funded trade mission to Tokyo aimed at increasing tourism and promoting Cairns as a wedding destination.

While Mr Ford described the outcome of the venture as "hugely successful" with an immediate lift in bookings for weddings in Cairns, he said the potential market was suffering because

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there was only one flight - Jetsar - a day to Cairns from Tokyo and none from western Japan.

Mr Ford said the trip had been prompted by a drop in the market resulting from the dropping of the twice daily Qantas flights.

"Cairns - and Australia - as a wedding destination has dropped away so we are trying to privately stimulate the interest," Mr Ford said.

"While there is no problem getting

here, getting back is another story because the people from western Japan have to overnight in Tokyo because there are no connecting flights."

The average cost of a Japanese wedding is about \$40,000 with the wedding industry injecting about \$19 million a year into the Cairns economy.

Mr Ford said the company had linked with a dynamic, young Japanese wed-



Phillip Ford

ding company - World Bridal Co Ltd - and was confident the link would push more weddings to Cairns.

While the exchange rate was working in Australia's favour, Mr Ford said this advantage was being negated by the lack of flights.

"That has shown up in the latest international tourist figures," Mr Ford said.

The figures, released last week, showed a 20 per cent fall in the number of Japanese visitors to Cairns last year compared with 2007.



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