



13 FEBRUARY 2017

MEDIA RELEASE

REX RESPONDS TO BEGA VALLEY SHIRE COUNCIL MERIMBULA AIRPORT UPGRADE MEDIA STATEMENT

Regional Express (Rex) refers to the Merimbula Airport upgrade media statement issued by Bega Valley Shire Council on Friday 10 February 2017 and Rex would like to clarify some severe misrepresentations and negative innuendo contained within the media statement.

Council has represented that it is uncertain about Rex's continued presence on the Merimbula to Sydney route as a justification for the airport works. This is irresponsible by Council as in 2015 Rex communicated in writing that ***"the current facilities at Merimbula Airport will be more than adequate to service the local needs for the next 15 years"*** and that ***"Rex intends to continue to do so over the period using our Saab 340 aircraft"***.

Council's statement that they are surprised by Rex's views, indicates that Council has not sought to consider Rex's past feedback because Rex's views have remained consistent for more than a decade. The Bega Valley Shire Residents and Ratepayers Association wrote to Rex on Monday 6 February 2017 to raise their concerns and to seek Rex's views and within the same week Rex responded. The fact that Council have not bothered to talk to Rex, a company that has a deep understanding of the commercial realities of operating regional air services, indicates that Council have failed to undertake a proper assessment of their proposal.

Council has implied that Rex is criticising the airport upgrade out of commercial self interest particularly due to the recent deregulation of the Merimbula to Sydney route. Rex has always advocated for deregulation of NSW routes and has given three public submissions to government on this matter in 2007, 2012 and 2014. These public submissions are attached and are also available on the Rex website. Rex is glad the current government has heeded Rex's call to deregulate the NSW intrastate routes.

Council's decision to extend the runway is its prerogative. However, if the unwarranted upgrades result in a significant increase to the airport passenger tax, Rex is putting the council on notice that Rex may reduce its prime time early morning and late evening services.

Regional Express (Rex) is Australia's largest independent regional airline operating a fleet of more than 50 Saab 340 aircraft on some 1,500 weekly flights to 58 destinations throughout all states in Australia. In addition to the regional airline Regional Express, the **Rex Group** comprises wholly owned subsidiaries **Pel-Air Aviation** (air freight and charter operator), **Air Link** (Dubbo-based regional airline) and the **Australian Airline Pilot Academy**.

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