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Rex plans to redeploy Dubbo services

By SIMON CHAMBERLAIN

REGIONAL Express (Rex) said it had begun planning a redeployment of its services to other NSW regional centres but would not confirm if it would completely withdraw its services from Dubbo after it accused Dubbo City Council of not being committed to finding a solution to the question of charging for security screening costs.

Rex's general manager network strategy, Warrick Lodge said a meeting yesterday with Dubbo City Council mayor, Mathew Dickerson and the council's director of corporate development, Ken Rogers had been a disappointing outcome for Rex and said all appeals to the council not to impose charges for airport screening had been rebuffed.

"Following the meeting between Rex management and the Dubbo mayor today, Rex has formed the view that the mayor is not committed to finding a solution in a timely manner," Rex said in a media statement late yesterday evening.

"Consequently, Rex will set in motion plans for the redeployment of Dubbo services to other NSW regional centres that do not impose charges for airport screening. Rex will also refuse to pay any security charges imposed henceforth."

Mr Lodge said part of the overall aim of the meeting was to try and establish a timeframe of four to six weeks to resolve the impasse over the security screening but even that goal could not be reached.

He said it was blatantly unfair for its passengers to be subsidising QantasLink by more than \$300,000 per annum for a requirement that is only legally applicable to QantasLink.

Also strongly condemning Dubbo City Council was the Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA) representing more than 100 airlines and aviation-related companies

"[The] council's decision to apply screening charges to all operators, whether they trigger passenger screening or not, is unjust and should be repealed immediately. Dubbo's decision is clearly out of step with the majority of local councils with RPT airports," the RAAA spokesman said.

Cr Dickerson, who arrived back from Sydney about 6pm, told the Daily Liberal he thought the talks had been constructive and the council was open to continuing talks, even though the process of local government was slower than Rex hoped to move at.

"It was a 90-minute meeting and we had some good talks," Cr Dickerson said.

"We covered a range of different issues and I had the view we would continue discussions," he said.

Mr Lodge said Rex had to plan well ahead to maintain its access slots in Sydney and this was why the airline hoped an agreement to try and move the matter forward in the next four to six weeks could be achieved.

He said Rex had grown its passenger movements by 80 per cent in the last decade and Dubbo was a solid cornerstone in its business.