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Rex says local routes safe despite cuts

Flights between Grafton, Taree and Sydney will continue as usual, despite Regional Express (Rex) announcing cuts to six routes in western New South Wales.

Warrick Lodge from Rex says the local routes are safe at the moment, but it is impossible to guarantee the long-term situation.

Mr Lodge says the airline is struggling with a nationwide pilot shortage, economic uncertainty and a lack of State Government subsidies.

"It's a difficult game and an impossible game to ... provide guarantees on, because we've seen so much change in the last two years that anything's possible," he said.

"It gets to the point where we have to question what we're doing and we have to make decisions for our business for the longer term.

"But we're keeping our head above water on the routes at the moment and we've got no plans to make any changes there."

Mr Lodge says the number of travellers on the route has increased substantially in the past two years.

He says that has helped the airline remain viable, but the situation remains uncertain.

"The aviation industry in general has changed dramatically in the last 18 months and the pilot shortage is something that has certainly clipped the wings of many airlines and regional airlines probably feel the brunt of that more than most," he said.

"I think there will be uncertain times ahead in 2009."