

## Source: ABC Broken Hill, 22 May 12

### Flights to Melbourne announced

By [Noah Schultz-Byard](#)

For the first time in Broken Hill's history people will be able to fly from the far west city to Melbourne, as of July this year.

Regional Express Airlines' (Rex) announcement of the new route, as well as additional flights on existing routes to Sydney and Adelaide, is hoped to boost local tourism and business opportunities.

In the expanded plans Rex will fly return from Broken Hill to Melbourne, via Mildura, six times a week with tickets expected to cost around \$200 each way.

As a result of these changes the number of people coming through Broken Hill's airport is expected to increase from 90,000 to 130,000 per year.

There will also be flights directly connecting Mildura to Sydney and Adelaide.

John Sharp, the Deputy Chairman of Rex Airlines, said today's announcement was positive news for his company as well as for the people of Broken Hill and Mildura.

"This is the biggest increase in air services that Rex has ever announced," Mr Sharp said.

"We're very pleased to be announcing, for the very first time, a direct air service between Broken Hill, through Mildura, to Melbourne.

"This is going to be a very significant boost for the business community of Broken Hill and also for tourism in Broken Hill."

The expansion of already existing services to and from Broken Hill will also help to boost the local economy, Mr Sharp said.

"There'll be an additional four services each week between Broken Hill and Adelaide, we're increasing the services between Broken Hill and Sydney with an additional five services per week."

These changes represent a 45 per cent increase in the number of seats flying into and out of Broken Hill each week.

As well as the improvements to the Broken Hill service, the Mildura airport will become one of the busiest regional hubs in Australia after the changes are implemented.

Unique amongst the country's regional centres, Mildura will be directly connected to Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide as well as, as Mr Sharp put it, "one of the most iconic regional cities in Australia", Broken Hill.

### Strong partnership

Regional Express and the Broken Hill City Council seem to have settled their differences after, in November last year, Rex threatened to terminate all flights to and from the city if a new partnership agreement could not be reached.

"We'd like to pay tribute to (Broken Hill Mayor) Wincen Cuy and his council... for the very strong partnership which we've had with the Broken Hill City Council for as many years as anybody can think back to," Mr Sharp said this morning.

Broken Hill City Council General Manger Frank Zaknich said he welcomed the "very exciting news".

"Rex are to be congratulated on their timing of this and the investment that they're making in services for Broken Hill which is a part of our partnership agreement and wouldn't have occurred unless we had that agreement in place."

Mr Zaknich said, as part of the five year agreement, council have maintained a head tax system where Rex will be rewarded with reduced payments to the city if it is able to increase the number of passengers it carries in and out of Broken Hill.

"That model assists to grow the service for the future and with upwards of 90,000 seat capacity on the various routes now to be introduced into Broken Hill, there's plenty of room for growth and movement."

The increased services to Broken Hill coincide with a broader plan to increase tourism in Broken Hill, Mr Zaknich said.

"Coupled with this will be an extensive marketing campaign that Council, in cooperation with Rex, destination NSW and Inland Tourism, will be launching over the next month or so."

### **Tourism Opportunities**

Chairman of the Broken Hill Tourism Advisory Group, John Groenendijk, said the scheduled changes are a great sign for tourism in the area.

"I think it has enormous potential," Mr Groenendijk said, "and I think the opportunities for Broken Hill are actually quite vast."

As it stands, the majority of people who visit Broken Hill do so by car, Mr Groenendijk said, but any improvement in air services will help to attract people to the city.

"Whether or not the link to Mildura and to Melbourne will make a huge difference from that point of view, I guess time will tell.

"What it does do is it opens up the opportunity for it to develop... and I've always thought the link between Mildura and Broken Hill has been totally under developed."

Broken Hill is now closely linked enough to Mildura to be accessible but far enough away from major centres to offer unique experiences and that, Mr Groenendijk says, is a great opportunity.

"We encourage the people from Mildura to come up to Broken Hill and have a taste of what is the real outback."

