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## **Regional Express Halts Queensland Flights Due to Pilot Shortage**

BRISBANE - A regional airline has suspended all flights on its only Queensland route because of pilot shortages.

Airline Regional Express (Rex) (ASX:REX) said it would suspend flights between Maryborough and Brisbane from today until March 16 - only a month after launching the service.

Rex managing director Geoff Breust said he was extremely disappointed with the "drastic action".

"However, given the pilot shortage, we are faced with the choice of suspending some of our regular services to build up a reserve buffer or cancelling ad hoc flights each time a pilot calls in sick," Mr Breust said in a statement.

"We believe that the former is the more responsible course of action and provides greater certainty to our customers.

"Rex has traditionally been the airline with the lowest cancellation rates in Australia and we intend for it to remain that way even in these very trying circumstances."

Mr Breust said the suspension followed similar moves with services in Cooma and Wagga Wagga in NSW, but did not believe there would be any further disruptions.

Rex is Australia's largest independent regional airline, operating a fleet of 35 Saab 340 aircraft on 1,300 flights weekly to 25 destinations from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Mr Breust said Rex had the full complement of pilots for its flying schedule, but 15 per cent of them were in the final stages of their two-month ground school and simulator training.

"These pilots will progressively join Rex's flying ranks between now and Christmas," he said.

"This has resulted in a thinning out of our normal pool of reserve crews to meet contingencies like last minute illnesses."

He said Rex had more than 700 applicants for its pilot cadet scheme, and the first batch of 20 selected candidates would start their 32 weeks of training at the Rex pilot academy in December.

"We call on the other major airlines in Australia to train their own pilots instead of simply poaching massively from the regional airlines and the pilot training schools," Mr Breust said.