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Rex announces Network Changes



Regional Express (Rex) has today announced a number of network schedule changes as a result of the continuing pilot shortage. Rex will withdraw from the Cooma (Snowy Mountains) to Sydney route indefinitely, which had been planned to recommence from 6 June 2008, as well as reducing flying activities elsewhere in the network.

Rex General Manager, Network Strategy and Sales, Mr Warrick Lodge said, "When we announced our decision to suspend the summer schedule for Cooma, we were counting on a lessening of the recruitment activities of the major carriers over the winter period to enable us to resume the Cooma service in winter. Unfortunately this was not to be and in the most recent month of April, Rex experienced 5% attrition in our pilot ranks, with the attrition rate in this FY tracking above 50%."

"The continued high attrition rate means that our flight schedules remain vulnerable to last minute sickness of the flight crew. We believe that the responsible course of action is to reduce the flight schedule, which will provide us with more reserve pilots and in turn will translate into a reduction of last minute flight cancellations." Other changes in the Rex network include some flight reductions, particularly relating to lower demand weekend flights. Routes impacted include Adelaide to Mount Gambier, Melbourne to Mount Gambier, Melbourne to Mildura, Melbourne to Albury and Sydney to Griffith. Overall this will see a reduction in the planned flying activities of around 3%. The complete details of the affected flights are available on Rex's website. Commenting on the pilot shortage, Rex Chief Pilot and General Manager of Flight Operations, Mr Chris Hine said, "Rex recently announced that it had taken full ownership of the pilot academy, which is now called the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA). The second batch of 23 cadets commenced their training on 7 April 2008, bringing the total cadets to 39. With the first batch of cadets now well into the flying stage of the training, everything is on track for this first batch to graduate later in the year and commence their conversion training onto Rex's Saab 340 aircraft. A new batch of 20 cadets is scheduled to be enrolled every 3 months."

"Once our cadets start to enter into service late this year, we believe that we will be in a much better position to be in control of our pilot strength and hopefully we could envisage a gradual resumption of our network expansion."

Customers holding reservations for the Cooma service and other affected flights should contact the Rex Customer Contact Centre on 131713 for a full refund. Rex is Australia's largest independent regional airline operating a fleet of 38 Saab 340 aircraft on more than 1,200 flights weekly to 23 destinations from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. The Rex Group comprises Regional Express, air freight and charter operator Pel- Air Aviation and Dubbo based regional airline Air Link, as well as the pilot academy Australian Airline Pilot Academy.