

ABC –WESTERN PLAINS NSW

Regional Express (Rex) says its subsidiary aviation company will provide an equivalent service if it wins the 10 year contract for the New South Wales air ambulance.

Pel-Air has tendered for the \$70 million contract that has been held by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) for the past seven years.

The RFDS has lost the contract to Pel-Air in Victoria and there are concerns the same will happen in New South Wales.

Rex managing director Jim Davis says the company has a lot of expertise in medical retrieval.

"Pel-Air currently provides medical services throughout Australia using small corporate jets and also supplies these services to the South Pacific and South-East Asia," he said.

"As an example, when Jose Ramos Horta, the Prime Minister of East Timor, was shot a while back and injured, it was Pel-Air that evacuated him back to Australia."

"The tender is quite prescriptive and we will be obliged to supply exactly the same services as have been provided in the past and Pel-Air is an expert in this area we have partnered with CareFlight International, NRMA CareFlight and we have provided successful medical services everywhere."

The Member for Dubbo, Dawn Fardell, is worried that if the RFDS loses the contract, years of community fundraising efforts will go to Pel Air's Singaporean interests.

But Mr Davis says the concerns are unfounded.

"Pel-Air is an Australian company and I can assure you every cent it makes stays in Australia and gets reinvested into the company," he said.

Mr Davis says the Government is expected to award the tender early next month.

"This is a public tender, there is nothing being taken away from any incumbent operator, this tender was always due to expire and be re-tendered," he said.

"It's normal Government process and I think the Government should be left to make a decision after it's done its due diligence."

Premier Nathan Rees says he understands the concern.

"There's lots of scaremongering around these sorts of things inevitably when there are changes to arrangements. I'll get some detail on it but I'd be appalled if ever we saw the end of the Royal Flying Doctor Service," he said.