

THEY'RE BACK

Rex to re-open Griffith-Melbourne flights

By LUCY MARTIN

AFTER weeks of speculation, Regional Express (Rex) has put Griffith on the map in spectacular style by announcing it will recommence flights to Melbourne next month.

Rex will fly from Melbourne to Griffith at 10.30am and back again at 12pm once a day, six days a week starting on October 9.

The relaunch comes after weeks of negotiations between Rex and Griffith City Council.

"The community has shown a great desire for the return of the Melbourne

to Griffith air service, one which provides vital economic and social links for this community," acting mayor Dom Testoni said.

"The service will allow large numbers of the local community to travel to Melbourne for business, recreational, health and educational purposes."

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No passenger taxes

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It's a triumphant return for the Melbourne route, which was cancelled a mere seven months after its July 2007 launch due to a crippling pilot shortage.

The international recession and an unreliable local economy further stymied the chance of a return.

But after recruiting 167 pilots since July 2007, the airline is ready to fly south again, albeit with caution, Rex general manager of network strategy and sales Warrick Lodge said.

"We will adopt a very prudent approach in these still very uncertain times," he said.

As a sign of its commitment and dedication to the new service, council will not impose any passenger taxes on Melbourne flights until June, 2011.



We are delighted that we get to see the resumption of a service that is so important to the community.

Peter Fussell

Mr Lodge said council's support was vital in securing the service's return.

"We do and we have always felt that there was a lot of opportunity and a real need for a service from Melbourne to Griffith," he said.

"This is one of the best working relationships Rex has had with any council.

"If that support wasn't there, we wouldn't have come to the table so quickly.

"I need to stress that it is Rex

that will bear the full commercial risk and that the service is not being subsidised or underwritten from the council's budget."

The chairman of the Griffith Airport Management Committee, Peter Fussell, was thrilled with the news.

"We were all disappointed when the service was cancelled, especially after all the hard work council and the chamber of commerce put in," he said.

"So we are indeed delighted that we get to see the resumption of a service that is so important to the community.

"The council made the changes to the passenger tax in order to facilitate the return of the Melbourne service and to say we're just as committed as they are."