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Rex cuts lifeline to Ridge

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Regional Express Holdings Ltd (Rex) on Tuesday announced plans to terminate all operations of its fully owned subsidiary Air Link Pty Ltd.

Air Link will pull out of its Dubbo to Cobar, Bourke, Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Coonamble routes.

“Regional aviation all over Australia is in great jeopardy because of spiralling costs, ever increasing regulatory requirements and the shortage of pilots and engineers. In this climate the very thin routes that Air Link operates out to western NSW do not make economic sense,” Rex managing director Jim Davis said.

“We are heeding the Federal Government’s advice to prepare for the termination of the enroute rebate by starting to phase out all marginal routes that would not be commercially viable without this incentive.”

Lightning Ridge Tourism Association president Rebel Black said that the daily air service, offered by Rex’s subsidiary Air Link, provided a lifeline to the community’s opal and tourism industry and without it, future development could be seriously jeopardised.

“We rely on the service to provide transport to international opal buyers, professional service providers including lawyers and accountants and of course higher yield visitors,” Ms Black said.

The NSW Ministry of Transport will call for expressions of interest for the affected routes, however it is too early to tell if another airline will be interested.

In the last 12 months Rex has exited four routes on its network and no other airline has picked any of these routes up.

Air Link began to fly regional passenger air services in 1991 and from that point gradually expanded its route network.