



Warren Truss

Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for Wide Bay

M E D I A R E L E A S E

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TRUSS WELCOMES PROPOSED REX – SUNSHINE EXPRESS MERGER

Australian Government Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Warren Truss, today welcomed news that Regional Express and Sunshine Express will merge.

Mr Truss said he was heartened by Rex's intention to continue services to seven regional centres including Maryborough and Hervey Bay. These services would have been in jeopardy if the Sunshine Express operation had become untenable.

"QantasLink announced last week that it intended to put a 36-seat Dash 8 aircraft on the Brisbane – Hervey Bay and the Brisbane – Thangool routes. This initiative may have been good for Hervey Bay and Biloela but it could have left five centres without a regular air service, including Maryborough."

Mr Truss said Sunshine Express had been struggling to maintain schedules since one of its Metro 23 aircraft was damaged in a servicing incident and the airline was unable to find a replacement.

"While Rex may not yet be well known in Queensland, it has become one of the most successful and profitable regionally-based airline in the southern states over recent years."

Mr Truss appealed to passengers in the areas serviced by Sunshine Express to back the new venture and in these days of higher fuel prices to think again about travelling by air.

"Local residents are likely to enjoy the benefits of very competitive fares with Qantas entering some routes to compete with the new Sunshine Express. What is most important, however, is to have a quality service and airlines which will stay loyal to their customers for the long haul.

"I am disappointed that Qantas, which has twice previously abandoned the Fraser Coast, has chosen to put huge capacity on to just two routes – a move which would have potentially put Sunshine Express out of business – and left five other regional centres without air links to Brisbane.

"I am happy to hear that Rex will be retaining most of the staff from Sunshine Express and will be upgrading the fleet as it has done in other states.

"Rex has advised that it will eventually add two Saab 340s to the Sunshine Express network. These 34-seat aircraft will join the existing 19-seat Metroliners. I am sure that Queensland passengers will welcome the addition of the larger and more comfortable SAAB aircraft to the fleet," he said.

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