

RELYING ON REX FOR REGIONAL LIFESTYLE, CITY CAREER (ABOUT REGIONAL)

Rising out of the dust of the 2001 collapse of beloved Australian airline Ansett, Rex has a key role in the growth of our local shires, allowing more people to live regionally and still commute regularly to business centres like Sydney and Melbourne.

Adelqui Rizzotto, whose family know him as Junior, is an easy-going surfer and Brazilian native who married a Bega Valley local and has settled in Tura Beach with their three kids.

He's also the director and project manager at Grand Civil, an engineering company he founded with business partner Matt Venning, who happens to live in Queensland.

In this age of transport and technology, Adelqui and Matt can live where they want and maintain a thriving business. They join a growing number of people who are not limited by the career choices available in their regional homes.

"We wouldn't be able to live in Tura Beach without having Rex there, I wouldn't be able to do my job, we have to live somewhere near an airport," Adelqui acknowledges.

A spokesperson for the airline says that Rex "is mindful of the tremendous socioeconomic impact critical flight services have on the regional communities we serve and works in partnership with these communities to balance their needs against Rex's commercial imperatives."

Estimating his annual flights out of Merimbula to be in the 10-20 mark, Adelqui laughs and corrects himself, "actually, maybe 20 for business and 30 if you count surf trips and trips to Brazil."

Handy for Adelqui, as Rex has announced a 23kg baggage allowance for passengers who have an international connection within 24 hours of their Rex flight.

Over the last few months, Adelqui's business partner has had family commitments which require him to be out of their Hervey Bay office so Adelqui has been commuting much more than usual.

"There must be more people doing what I'm doing, which is to fly from Merimbula early Monday morning and fly back on Friday because lately, I haven't been able to get a Friday flight for under \$500, even booking months in advance, so I've been flying on Thursday or Saturday instead. The Saturday flight is very cruisy and not packed like the weekday flights but it means I miss a whole day of the weekend with my family."

Also juggling work and family is Merimbula resident and lawyer Carmen Thompson, who says the service Rex offers is priceless.

"I am very grateful for Rex, without the services they offer to Sydney I wouldn't be able to work as much as I do up there. How many people get to live in paradise, spend five minutes driving to an airport and land in a major city within an hour?"

Carmen is co-director at Sautelle and White Lawyers in Merimbula and says she saves her clients money by not overnighing in Sydney and at the same time, maximize the time she spends with her own family.

"I can fly up and back from Sydney, get a full day of Court work in and still be at home with my babies in the evening."

Like Adelqui, Carmen has recently experienced not being able to buy the flight she wanted, when she needed to be in Sydney at short notice.

“There just weren’t any tickets for sale out of Merimbula that day, so my husband drove me to the Cooma airport and I flew from there. Still much better than driving the whole way,” she says.

Rex is clearly growing, with the company reporting it has purchased three Saab 340 aircraft this year, taking the national total to 60 planes, but a spokesperson says there are no imminent plans to expand services to the Bega Valley.

“Rex is committed to providing reliable and affordable air services to the community of Merimbula, consisting of eight return flights every week between Merimbula and Melbourne, and 19 weekly return flights between Merimbula and Sydney, with increases in the number of flights over the busy December and January period.”

Meanwhile, Merimbula airport is preparing for the increased demand for regional flights by upgrading its terminal.

A spokesperson for Bega Valley Shire Council says “work continues to progress well on the terminal upgrade, with some carpark works planned for the coming few weeks. The project will be fully completed before the summer holiday period.”