



**REX PUSHES INTO QUEENSLAND:** Regional Express network strategy and sales general manager Warrick Lodge (pictured at Wagga Airport) says the airliner is turning its attention to northern Queensland.

# Rex's reach on the up and up in QLD

BY BRODIE OWEN

WAGGA-BASED airliner Regional Express (Rex) has emerged as a major player in Queensland, with the company set to "ramp up" services in the state's regional travel market.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has given the nod of approval for Rex to conduct business on a suite of new routes in outback Queensland.

The Queensland Government recently awarded the airliner two western Queensland services as well as a gulf service on the northern tip.

All three routes are subsidised.

Rex will take control of the three new routes on top of two existing routes in the state.

The CASA approval allows Rex to start flying with a "modest service" from January 3.

With the announcement of new routes in regional Queensland, Rex said it is now cost-effective for the company to tap into the Townsville to Cairns route, which was recently abandoned by Virgin Australia.

Rex has never flown to Cairns before.

"Once we have bedded in the new regulated routes (western and gulf) we will look to ramp up services as well as look at other opportunities to service far north Queensland," Rex network strategy and sales

general manager Warrick Lodge said.

"The Rex board has decided to increase focus on Queensland and to gradually build up our resources and investments in Queensland."

The previous operator of the western and gulf routes - Skytrans - did not win the rights.

At the time, the Queensland-based airline complained the location of companies should have played a bigger role in the consideration of contracts.

A number of Cairns-based tourism agencies have also criticised the decision. Mr Lodge said Rex was committed to retaining as much of Skytrans' staff as possible.