

Airfares take off

REGIONAL Express (Rex) has encouraged travellers to book their tickets early in a bid to avoid paying an higher fare.

Fares to and from Mount Gambier have risen from the standard entry level fare of \$98 to \$119 recently.

Rex network strategy and sales general manager Varrick Lodge said the fare price rise was due to the end of their summer sale.

"The summer sale fare expired on Feb 16 and has expired across our whole network, so entry level prices have returned to \$119," he said.

Demand for the Rex flights to and from Adelaide has increased since the folding of O'Connor Airlines in December.

"In January we recorded 1100 passengers compared to 7300 in January 2007 when O'Connor was flying out of Mount Gambier in to Adelaide and Melbourne, which is an 11pc increase," he said.

But, last week Rex announced they had no

intention to increase services in Mount Gambier.

However demand for popular flights in the coming weeks has seen fares jump above the \$150 mark, including a 5.10pm flight this Friday to Adelaide, which was selling yesterday for \$244.

"With Rex now the only carrier we have tried to maintain a balance between supply and demand, but 60pc of all passengers since the start of this financial year have traveled on the cheapest fare," Mr Lodge said.

Local Rex flights are also suffering from the nationwide pilot shortage.

An Adelaide to Mount Gambier flight was cancelled on February 10 the same flight was the delayed for more than two hours on Sunday.

Mr Lodge urged the public to bear with the company, while they attempt to rectify the situation.

"We are doing everything we can and hope to get schedule integrity back into our operation," he said.