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MEDIA RELEASE

REX OPPOSES PROPOSAL TO MANDATE MINIMUM EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR AIRLINE PILOTS

Regional Express (Rex) is concerned over recent suggestions requiring all pilots engaged in airline operations in Australia to have a minimum of 1500 hours flying time as suggested in a current Senate enquiry into pilot training.

The move follows a similar proposal in the United States which was a knee jerk reaction to a fatal airline accident. Ironically, the accident in question involved two experienced pilots with well over 2000 hours of flight experience each.

Like many major airlines around the world, Rex runs a cadet programme specifically designed to produce high quality pilots. Results from comprehensive simulator and aircraft proficiency tests have conclusively proven that cadets in their first year of flying demonstrate equal skills in all aspects tested. In their second year of flying their performance surpasses the more experienced direct intake pilots with over 1500 hours at point of entry.

Commenting on the proposal, Rex Managing Director, Jim Davis, said "There is absolutely no scientific basis that a pilot with less than 1500 hours would be unsafe. If that were the case, the RAAF would not be entrusting our sophisticated fighter jets to pilots with less than 500 hours of flight experience. In fact European and Australian authorities have officially approved training programmes that allow pilots to fly large jet aircraft with less than 100 hours of direct flight experience."

"A minimum requirement of 1500 hours for airline pilots would be an absolute disaster. It would mean the end of all pilot cadet programmes in Australia and make it impossible for airlines to source enough pilots to cope with planned future expansion.

"This would have a disastrous effect amongst small and regional operators as their pilot ranks would get plundered by the larger airlines as we saw in FY08, when Rex lost half its pilots to the major airlines in one year. To stay in operation, the smaller operators would have no choice but to accept pilots from General Aviation with sufficient minimum hours but who may not have the desired skill level to be an airline pilot. This would lead to the opposite effect intended by the proposal.

"What the Senate Inquiry needs to focus on is the quality of training a pilot receives not the quantity of hours a pilot has flown".

Rex has made a submission to the senate enquiry which is available for public viewing and also on its website.



Regional Express

Regional Express (Rex) is Australia's largest independent regional airline operating a fleet of more than 40 Saab 340 aircraft on some 1,300 weekly flights to 35 destinations throughout New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland. The Rex Group comprises Regional Express, air freight and charter operator Pel-Air Aviation and Dubbo-based regional airline Air Link, as well as the pilot academy Australian Airline Pilot Academy.

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