

OPEN LETTER TO DUBBO CONSTITUENTS

Dubbo City Council should come clean on Security Charges

Dubbo City Council (DCC) has made the blatantly unfair and downright outrageous decision to impose security screening charges on Rex passengers that are not legally required to be screened. In the process Rex passengers will be subsidising QantasLink to the tune of \$300,000 every year which works out to be around \$9 per departing passenger (no screening for arriving passengers). See Media Release on our website for full details on this matter.

Hundreds of outraged constituents have written to the DCC to demand a reversal of this decision. You can see all the petitions on the Rex website main menu bar.

As expected, DCC could not give any valid justification and in their automated response the DCC simply hid behind the motherhood statement:

"The proposal to screen all passengers was made unanimously in the interest of safety, security, fairness and equity"

This is pure hogwash and makes one wonder if there are other motives involved:

Safety and Security

- DCC is not an authority on security. We challenge DCC to produce a single report from a security expert supporting its untenable position. The Federal Government assessed the key risk drivers for regional airports in its 2009 White Paper and concluded that the only turboprop aircraft that presented a level of risk significant enough to warrant security screening at regional airports was the Q400 used by QantasLink. The new security regime came into effect from July 2012.
- Screening does not impact on the security of Dubbo airport and as such DCC should leave the decision to the stakeholders that could likely be impacted. Rex is in full agreement with the official Government policy position that its Saab 340 aircraft do not represent a security risk that warrants screening at regional airports.
- Having both Screened and Unscreened departures would give a freedom of choice to consumers. This is already happening in many regional airports, including Wagga Wagga and Albury. Airline customers are enlightened enough to decide for themselves if they want the inconvenience of 30 minutes earlier check-in times (that increase total travel times) and the extra cost that comes with screening.
- In recent days the DCC has made further statements to try to justify its untenable position:
".. if your car has a seat belt it would seem logical to use it (ignore the law - think of the safety)"
".. when an aircraft out of Dubbo is used to fly into the Opera House"

These are silly and emotive statements that are not worthy of Council. Most would own a bike helmet but no one would wear them for walking down the street. It is all about risk assessment. Broken Hill, Parkes, Orange, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga and Albury and hundreds of other regional airports around Australia do not screen all aircraft so what makes Dubbo different?

Fairness and Equity

We fail to understand DCC's contorted logic. Surely it is blatantly unfair for Rex passengers to pay for a requirement that is not legally required. Perhaps DCC is referring to commercial fairness as they tried to explain in one of the responses to the constituents:

"We would be justifiably accused of giving Qantaslink an unfair advantage in the marketplace by protecting only their passengers."

This is a pathetic attempt to justify the unjustifiable. The only party that would complain about giving unfair advantage to QantasLink would be Rex and for several months Rex has been requesting that its passengers not be screened in accordance with the Air Transport Safety Regulations. In reality, forcing Rex to subsidise QantasLink to the tune of \$300,000 would be the real and massive unfair advantage.

DCC's Unanimous Decision

DCC has cited the unanimous decision of councillors as if this is a justification. One of the constituent's petition to DCC eloquently says it all:

"Whether the proposal was made unanimously has no bearing on the matter it simply means everyone got it wrong."

What really matters are the views of the community and DCC has not bothered to consult the community on this vital issue. In fact, a poll by a local daily shows that of the 237 respondents, 78.1% are supportive of Rex's position.

So why is DCC doing this? Only you can force your elected representatives to reveal the true agenda behind this blatantly unfair and dubious decision which heavily penalises an independent company that has a Dubbo crew and maintenance base, employing 27 local staff.

The DCC is now resorting to deceitful methods to justify their actions. Besides misleading the NSW Deputy Premier (see our Media Release), they are now trying to lead you to believe that Rex passengers are only a very small minority (27%) of the total passengers when in fact they know that Rex passengers form 40% of the annual passenger numbers.

If you are as outraged by these questionable actions of DCC as we are, please petition your councillors to express your disgust with their decision and to call for a rescission motion. Here are their email addresses:

clrmathew.dickerson@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrben.shields@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrlyn.griffiths@dubbo.nsw.gov.au
clrallan.smith@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrbill.kelly@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrgreg.matthews@dubbo.nsw.gov.au
clrgreg.mohr@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrkevin.parker@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrtina.reynolds@dubbo.nsw.gov.au
clrrod.towney@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	clrjohn.walkom@dubbo.nsw.gov.au	

Copy us in at DCCpetitions@rex.com.au and we will monitor the outcome and put your letter on our website or other publicity media to keep the pressure on DCC. Also go to the next council meeting on Monday, 25 February to let your councillors know that if they do not listen to the community then they lose the legitimacy to be your representatives.

This matter is of paramount importance to Rex's continued ability to provide strong competition to QantasLink and most importantly frequent and affordable air travel for the community of Dubbo. Please help us to help you.

Do you support Rex's position on security screening?

Results of poll conducted by the *Daily Liberal* (14 Feb 13):

Is Regional Express right to complain about security screening costs?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	78.1%	185
No	21.9%	52
answered question		237

Here is a sample of the views of the constituents. You can see all the reactions at our website:

"To see the effect of competition, check out the air services to Tamworth, a comparable city to Dubbo.

Today, 15th February, there will be nine Sydney flights out of Dubbo. Cheapest price at time of writing, \$168 with Rex.

Today, 15th February, there will be five Sydney flights out of Tamworth. Cheapest price at time of writing, \$340 with Qantas.

Nine flights versus five, \$168 versus \$340. Think about it. That is the text-book effect of competition. If screening is not required by Commonwealth or State law, it is asinine to require people to pay it. Why? Because if the unnecessary \$9 charge on Rex causes them to withdraw even one service to Dubbo, as it surely will, the people, and the City of Dubbo will pay very dearly. It is Qantas' choice to use larger planes that require screening, so why punish the airline that provides the competition that keeps prices down and services up?"

"Our company established its pilot plant in the Dubbo region for the benefit of the region; we are proceeding to build a commercial plant that can also only be accessed by commercial airline through Dubbo. This is just another example of governments in this country riding roughshod over the population. You should be ashamed of this abuse of power and I would hope that you will see the light and, if you must charge levies for a particular service you charge them only to people who need to use that service."

"As a regular business commuter to Dubbo .. this charge is an outrage. I have no confidence in your decision making abilities and will have to reconsider my business investments in an area where the council is dishonest."

"Slugging us with a further cost, one that would ultimately cause Rex to reconsider its decision to fly to Dubbo I think is an extremely unwise decision."

"Thank you for your (DCC's) prompt reply, while I appreciate all the points made your last point is the only one that applies to my question:

"The proposal to screen all passengers was made unanimously in the interest of safety, security, fairness and equity",

Whether the proposal was made unanimously has no bearing on the matter it simply means everyone got it wrong.

In the interests of safety and security; if it was in the interests of safety and security it would be in the regulations.

Fairness and equity...it is neither fair or equitable, we choose to fly Rex to support a regional airline which often flies us to the remote places that Qantas would not sustain, it is in fact unfair to impose an unnecessary screening process, and the subsequent levy on Rex passengers."

"Is Dubbo City Council to be bullied by large multinational conglomerates to put smaller regional companies out of business at the expense of the paying public? Because that's what this looks like and I am writing to you to voice my objection."

"The subsidisation by customers of one business to its competitor of around \$1,000,000 over 3 years would appear to me to be, frankly, bizarre."

"Why should the Dubbo Council demand that a visitor to your city who supports the "Small Australian Airline" which flies me on most weeks to places that QantasLink do not service, pay anything for something I will not use, and which I, and Rex are not required to use?"

"The question is "Why is Dubbo City Council favouring an action on behalf of Qantas" by demanding money from competitor airlines to pay for their expense????? Doesn't sound right to me???"

"I fully support your cause. This Council think they are a law unto themselves. From my own personal interactions with the current alderpersons they don't even reply to emails."

"To me this is a very blatant attempt to extort money from Rex passengers that do not legally have to be screened."

"Sounds And Acts like the Government "GONE" Crazy again."