

Rex jettisons Griffith to Melbourne flights

► GRIFFITH

By Patrick Wood

REGIONAL Express Airlines (Rex) has announced it will cancel flights between Griffith and Melbourne from July 1 in a move which has infuriated local business.

Rex said passenger numbers had dropped so low the route was no longer viable and anyone with flights already booked from July would be refunded.

"The Griffith to Melbourne route is currently Rex's thinnest route and as a result is one of the most marginal," Rex's general manager of network strategy and sales Warrick Lodge said.

He said the issue would be compounded by the incoming carbon tax and the scrapping of the enroute rebate scheme from July.

Rex has had a chequered history in Griffith and the Melbourne route was cancelled for 20 months between 2008 and 2009 as pilot

shortages crippled the business.

However, Griffith Business Chamber president Paul Pierotti said Rex had only itself to blame for recent drop in passenger numbers, saying prohibitive fares and poor scheduling weren't tailored to business travel.

"(Rex's) consultation with the Griffith Business Chamber and the business community has been exceptionally poor at best," Mr Pierotti said.

Mr Lodge said Rex held a good

dialogue with the community and council and from March 2011 had dedicated an aircraft to that route and scheduled flights on Tuesday and Thursdays so people could do round trips in the one day.

Griffith mayor Mike Neville said council was now making overtures to Qantas and any other interested airlines to break the Rex monopoly and begin service from Griffith.

Qantas yesterday said it had no plans at this stage to move into the city.