

Pilot scarcity set to take toll on city's air routes

By LYNTON GRACE

Air routes from the Dubbo airport are at risk of being cut as the pilot shortage begins to bite into regional air routes.

QantasLink, yesterday confirmed it has dropped two Dubbo flights.

While Rex promised it was not planning to cut any Dubbo routes, chief pilot Chris Hine has warned of a "bloodbath" among regional airline operators in coming months because of a pilot shortage.

"I foresee many regional operators not making it through 2008," Mr Hine said.

Rex has struggled with a 60 per cent annual pilot attrition rate, and QantasLink yesterday told the Daily Liberal it had "recently experienced a higher than normal pilot attrition rate."

QantasLink temporarily cut one Sunday flight and another daily flight that left Sydney for Dubbo at 11.30am.

"While these short-term reschedule changes are necessary, we remain strongly committed to our regional network," a QantasLink spokesperson said.

"This short-term dip in pilot numbers means we have had to make small and temporary adjustments to some of our schedules."

"We plan to reinstate capacity as of June 30."

Rex had no plans to cut any Dubbo routes but "can't rule any-

thing out", a spokesperson said. Rex has cut its Melbourne to Griffith route and postponed the Maryborough to Brisbane route.

"Those were newer routes added this financial year and at this stage these are the only routes affected," a Rex spokesperson said.

AirLink, the Dubbo airline that Rex purchased, should also keep its routes.

"The Rex group will continue to service the Dubbo area," the spokesperson said.

"I expect to see a bloodbath among the regional operators in the months ahead."

Rex chief pilot Chris Hine

Rex has started its own pilot school which it believes will fill its pilot gap.

However, Mr Hine said not all regional airlines had Rex's ability to fund their own cadet program and flying academy.

"I expect to see a bloodbath among the regional operators in the months ahead."

"Even QantasLink will not be spared as evidenced by its recent reduction in services to ports such as Dubbo, Armidale, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Newcastle and Tamworth."

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Regards
Maurice

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QantasLink suspends services Pilot shortages cut Dubbo flights

By LYNTON GRACE

Two Rex flights from Dubbo to Sydney have been suspended as the pilot shortage continues to bite into regional air routes.

QantasLink has confirmed it has suspended two flights from Sydney to Dubbo.

The flights were suspended on Monday and Tuesday.

The suspension of flights is a result of a pilot shortage.

The shortage is expected to continue for several months.

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QantasLink has given its understanding that its cuts are temporary.

The airline notified customers of the suspension of flights.

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and Rex has set a target to carry 200,000 passengers this financial year. I don't think two flights will have a negative net effect.

"Passengers weren't expected to be affected overall."

The strength of routes here is strong - while an expansion is important, Dubbo still has a full schedule. One of the strongest in the region is the Sydney to Dubbo route.

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