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Rex defends attempts to serve special needs passengers

Regional Express Airlines (Rex) has rejected criticism of its move to place restrictions on some passengers with disabilities.

The airline has applied to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for exemption from parts of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Under its plan, passengers on SAAB planes needing help to move from a wheelchair to the seat must organise a helper at departure and arrival.

Passengers who cannot follow safety directions must travel with a carer. Several disability advocacy groups have condemned the move.

However, Rex Airline's acting managing director, Jim Davis, says the company has been consulting community groups for two years about the best ways to carry people with special needs.

"I think Rex has actually made quite an effort to accommodate these people because we do recognise they need to travel," he said.

"We've probably spent more than \$700,000 on special equipment to help load these people into the aircraft."

Mr Davis says the company will give carers the lowest fare available.