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MEDIA RELEASE

REX RESPONDS TO RELAXATION OF VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN PILOTS

Following yesterday's announcement that visa regulations will be relaxed to allow foreign pilots into Australia on two-year work visas, Regional Express (Rex) has welcomed the initiative as a positive step forward but does not believe the two-year work visa will be sufficient to attract experienced commercial pilots given the worldwide shortage facing the industry.

The announcement to relax the visa regulations comes from Peter Dutton, Minister of Home Affairs, in an attempt to combat the current national pilot shortage.

Rex's Chief Operating Officer Mr Neville Howell said, "No experienced commercial pilot is prepared to relocate themselves and their families to Australia, with the expectation of having to relocate again after only two years. Even with the possibility of a further two-year extension, the program will not be attractive given that Australian pilot salaries are not internationally competitive. Only the pathway towards Permanent Residency could be potentially attractive to those seeking a work-life balance, however, this pathway is closed under the current regulations."

"The tighter regulations enacted in April of this year have caused havoc on Australian airlines, with Qantas announcing a dozen permanent cancellations to their regional services due to a critical shortage of pilots. Most airlines, including Rex, have experienced a doubling of cancellation rates in the past six months, for the same reason."

"It is a total mystery why Australia would choose to deter highly trained and scarce professionals like commercial pilots, causing major disruptions to the travelling public in the process."

"Rex is the only airline in Australia that has its own pilot academy and we have invested over \$35 million to ensure our own pipeline of pilots to meet our crewing needs. Even then, we still had to supplement this with recruitment drives over the years in the UK, South Africa and USA. Rex speaks with good authority when we say that the need for good experienced pilots cannot be met locally."

Rex calls on the Turnbull government to urgently restore the provisions available under the 457 Visa scheme prior to the changes implemented 18 April 2017. This approach would allow eligible pilots some certainty and a pathway to Permanent Residency.

Regional Express (Rex) is Australia's largest independent regional airline operating a fleet of more than 50 Saab 340 aircraft on some 1,500 weekly flights to 59 destinations throughout all states in Australia. In addition to the regional airline Regional Express, the **Rex Group** comprises wholly owned subsidiaries **Pel-Air Aviation** (air freight and charter operator), **Air Link** (Dubbo-based regional airline) and the **Australian Airline Pilot Academy**.

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