

9 JULY 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

REX BACKS SWEEPING REFORMS TO BETTER PROTECT PASSENGERS

Rex today endorsed calls for a change to Australian consumer laws to make it easier for airline passengers to get COVID-related refunds.

Australia's leading consumer advocacy group, Choice, said legal reforms were needed after a survey of more than 4,000 travellers revealed few had received refunds, those offered credits or vouchers instead were unlikely to be able to use them while the handful who succeeded in getting a refund were forced to wait several months to get their money back.

"Our survey shows many Australians have lost trust in the travel industry," Choice said.

"Qantas seemed to go out of its way to make things difficult," one respondent told Choice. "They deliberately limited the means by which customers could communicate with them. The chat option was removed from their webpage, as was a general email address. Phone calls were impossible as wait times were in excess of two hours, after which we were cut off more than once."

This experience is by no means unique as Qantas' own Facebook page revealed over 1,300 similar postings of frustrated consumers with many of them not having been able to get their refunds after being given the run around for well over a year.

These postings can be viewed at:

<https://www.rex.com.au/FlightInfo/pdf/QFComplaints.pdf?d=070621>

Rex Deputy Chairman, the Hon John Sharp AM, said the survey reinforces what the airline had been saying for more than a year about the scandalous refund practices of the other major Australian airlines.

"Qantas claims to embody the Spirit of Australia but thinks nothing of ripping off hundreds of thousands of families at a time of their greatest need with its unethical practices.

"Unscrupulous refund practices like these not only hurt the consumers but undermines confidence in travel and leads to the destruction of tens of thousands of jobs in the hospitality and travel-related industries.

"For this reason, Rex fully supports Choice's calls for the federal and state governments to implement easier travel refunds, minimum voucher/credit rights, a mandatory industry code for all airlines and large travel providers, and a travel and tourism industry ombudsman.

"Not only is this doing the right thing by the consumer, these initiatives will help the entire travel and hospitality industries to recover in the quickest possible manner, thereby benefitting all stakeholders."

Rex leads the industry by example and has a COVID Refund Guarantee which guarantees a full refund for passengers whose flight plans are directly impacted by COVID-related lockdowns and border closures, even if Rex is still operating the particular flights. The COVID Refund Guarantee can be found at:

<https://www.rex.com.au/Coronavirus/CovidBookingChanges.aspx>

“It is a shame that Qantas, which claims to be the national icon, turned out to be the national disgrace at aviation’s darkest hour. Nevertheless Rex will not be deterred and is prepared to lead the charge alone to restore people’s faith in the travel industry.”

“Our industry-leading COVID Refund Guarantee was further bolstered just a few days ago when we launched a dedicated portal, www.rex.com.au/Coronavirus/CovidBookingChanges.aspx, where valid refund requests can be made online and refunds secured automatically within 10 days with no fuss, no anguish and no delays. This is the true Spirit of Australia.”

“Rex will live up to the trust of its passengers who in the 70 years of Rex’s history have learnt that they can book flights on Rex with confidence because they know their wishes will be respected, their rights protected and they will always be treated with dignity. This is who we are and this is what we do.” Mr Sharp said.

Rex is Australia’s largest independent regional and domestic airline operating a fleet of 60 Saab 340 and six Boeing 737-800NG aircraft to 61 destinations throughout all states in Australia. In addition to the airline Rex, the Rex Group comprises wholly owned subsidiaries Pel-Air Aviation (air freight, aeromedical and charter operator) and the two pilot academies, Australian Airline Pilot Academy in Wagga Wagga and Ballarat.

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