



ALL ABOARD: Rex flight attendant Jenna McLean, captain Natalie Butterworth-Boord, Broken Hill Mayor Wincen Cuy, Mildura Airport CEO Bill Burke, Mildura Mayor John Arnold, Rex deputy chairman John Sharp, Mildura Airport chair Peter O'Donnell, Mildura Tourism CEO Rod Trowbridge and Rex first officer Tom Linehan.

Picture: David Sickerdick

AVIATION HUB

New flights from Mildura to Sydney, Adelaide and Broken Hill

By Liz O' Brien

FLIGHTS connecting Mildura to Sydney, Adelaide and Broken Hill will start on July 9.

It is the first time that an air link between Mildura and Broken Hill has been established.

Regional Express deputy chairman Peter Sharp announced the new and direct routes at a Mildura Airport function yesterday.

About 60,000 seats – an 85 per cent in-

crease – will be added to flights out of Mildura by the company annually, adding to the existing 70,000 seats on Rex's only current route to Melbourne.

"We're going to use Mildura as a major regional aviation hub and extend Mildura's air services from servicing one city in Australia to servicing four – going from Melbourne to Adelaide, to Broken Hill, and to Sydney – all operating out of Mildura," Mr Sharp said.

"It will make Mildura a very convenient

place to do business, it will add to the tourism tools for the tourism industry to function with, it's a great step forward for Mildura and a big step forward for Rex."

Mr Sharp said because the new flights were direct, travel cost and time would be reduced.

Local leaders said it was a "historic" day for the city.

A crowd of about 30 people gathered for yesterday's announcement, including Rex

officials, Mildura Airport CEO Bill Burke and chair Peter O'Donnell, Mildura Mayor John Arnold, councillors, Broken Hill Mayor Wincen Cuy and Mildura Tourism CEO Rod Trowbridge.

"It's great news that the connection of Mildura to three capital cities and an inland city of Broken Hill (is now available)," Cr Arnold said.

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'It's brilliant both for local people travelling and not having to head through Melbourne, and of course making it easier for our patients'

– Dr John Dyson-Berry

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NEW ERA: Broken Hill Mayor Wincen Cuy, REX deputy chair John Sharp and Mildura Mayor John Arnold mark the "historic day".

Picture: David Sickerdick

Aviation hub

New flights to Sydney, Adelaide, Broken Hill

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"No other city in Australia I believe has that opportunity that we have now," Cr Arnold said.

"It's great for local businesses, for local people and for tourism opportunities.

"It's exciting, 125 years ago next week the indenture was signed by the Chaffey brothers, today another red letter day and a great occasion for our city."

Mildura to Sydney flights will run Monday to Friday, leaving Mildura at 11.10am and arriving in Sydney at 1.20pm.

Flights to Adelaide will be available Monday to Saturday, departing at 10.05am and arriving in Adelaide 35 minutes later.

REX will provide two flights from Mildura to Broken Hill each day, one at 3.55pm, the second at 6.15pm, with a 25-minute flight time.

Five extra services between Broken Hill and Sydney were also announced and four between Broken Hill and Adelaide.

"It's going to take away a lot of pressures for people with medical reasons to visit the capital cities and also for leisure and business activities, so we're very happy and pleased and it's going to put Mildura and Broken Hill right on the map," Cr Arnold said.

Flights are now available on REX's website, with fares from Mildura to Adelaide starting at \$128. The Mildura to Sydney leg will sell from \$199, with no change to flight prices for Mildura to Melbourne, from \$116.

Doctor John Dyson-Berry, of Lime Medical Clinic, also said it was great news for professionals and patients.

"It's brilliant both for local people travelling and not having to head through Melbourne, and of course making it easier for our patients, especially (since going to) Adelaide has become quite difficult especially if patients are unable to drive," he said.

Cr Arnold said he hoped tourists and locals took advantage of the new services.

"It's absolutely vital that people support the services, because it's no good saying, 'We didn't support and it no longer exists,'" Cr Arnold said.

Until August last year Sharp Airlines provided a flight to Adelaide but the route became unviable.

REX's deputy chairman John Sharp said he didn't expect that would be a problem for REX.

"For Sharp Airlines it was very difficult, they were offering small aircraft as a single operation between Mildura and Adelaide," he said.

"REX is a much bigger airline, much more resources, with existing infrastructure, the cost of which is already covered in both Mildura and Broken Hill.

"So to extend our operations in Mildura and Broken Hill is a relatively small marginal cost for us to be able to do that, whereas for Sharp it was a major cost; that's why some airlines can do better in some places than others."

Mildura Airport CEO Bill Burke said the announcement was the culmination of a year's work.

"It's been a monumental day for Mildura Airport," he said.

"There's been a lot of work in the background over a long period of time, but it's now all come to fruition and I think the community will benefit resoundingly.

"It's taking where we need to go in terms of connections, from a tourism perspective flying was never a good option because people who flew in from Melbourne had to fly back from Melbourne to go on to some other destination, now tourists will be able to come in from Melbourne and fly out to Sydney or Adelaide or have a look at Broken Hill even.

"Or alternatively they'll be able to fly in from Sydney or Adelaide and end up in Melbourne."

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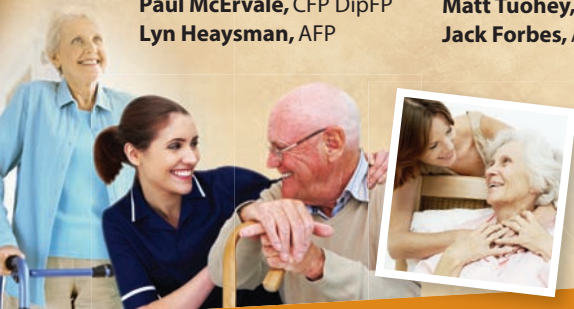
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Flights a boost for tourism

Mildura open to more markets

By Liz O'Brien

MILDURA is about to become far more accessible with the introduction of flights to three of Australia's major cities.

Regional Express deputy chairman Peter Sharp announced the new and direct routes at a Mildura Airport function yesterday.

The initiative has been praised by local leaders – Mildura Rural City councillors, Member for Mildura Peter Crisp and Member for Farrer Sussan Ley – professionals and business people.

Mildura Tourism CEO Rod Trowbridge said Rex's decision was a welcome boost to tourism.

"It really is going to go a long way to further promote Mildura, to further build up capacity in and out of Mildura," he said.

"In terms of increasing potential markets from Adelaide, from Sydney, from other areas of New South Wales, it's a very major and very welcome boost."

Mr Trowbridge said Mildura's connection to Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne had been part of Mildura Tourism's strategic plan for some time.

He said the flight boost would open the region up to new tourism markets nationwide, bringing with it tourism dollars.

"The most significant opportunity is attracting people from Sydney who would be keen to visit the Mildura region and Wentworth and Mungo National Park; maybe then fly on to Broken Hill," he said.

"Another option is the continuation of an inland Sydney/Melbourne touring route,



CONNECTED: Mildura Airport chair Peter O'Donnell welcomes Rex Airlines' announcement of new and direct flights from Mildura yesterday.

Picture: David Sickerdick

again basing themselves in Mildura for several days and exploring the local region."

Mr Trowbridge said the leisure market of people flying into Mildura was about 12 per cent of the entire market.

He said Adelaide was also a significant market for Mildura that he hoped could now

grow.

Peter O'Donnell, Mildura Airport chairman, said Mildura was finally able to take advantage of its location.

"It's massive for the region, I'm a local businessman as well so I see the connections out of that for tourism and business, it's a

wonderful announcement for our town and the airport as well," he said.

"There's not many regional towns that connect to three major capital cities.

"Our location is unique and we're finally able to take advantage of our location."

Mr O'Donnell said people had to support the initiative to ensure the flight options remained.

"We have to take advantage, it's a commercial decision by Rex to come here and if we don't support Rex as a community then commercially they'll need to make a different decision," he said.

"Right now they see it as an opportunity here and I urge the community to support this right from day one and let Rex know we want the flights to stay and that we'll support them all the way."

Member for Mildura Peter Crisp said Mildura Airport's redevelopment works would better cater for the additional flights.

"The Victorian Coalition Government investment with Mildura Airport Pty Ltd to upgrade the airport terminal has acted as an investment catalyst to businesses wishing to invest in aviation services to Mildura and Rex has responded with the reintroduction of these services," he said.

"The Coalition increased its initial \$3m for the airport to \$5m to ensure a prompt start to the upgrade project.

"This is excellent news for the Mildura region and I welcome the announcement."

Member for Farrer Sussan Ley said the commitment showed Rex's belief in the region.

"Here is an organisation supporting both regional ports and the training of young pilots to keep Australia's domestic airlines flying," she said.

"I hope we can return this support by using these services where and when possible."

Qantas restructure

QANTAS Airways is splitting its international and domestic operations into two separate businesses from July.

Each of the two businesses will have its own chief executive, and will report its financial results separately, Qantas said yesterday.

The restructure will bring about several changes to the airline's executive team, including the departure of Jetstar boss Bruce Buchanan.

"Formally separating the management of Qantas International and Qantas Domestic will ensure that we can independently run each business according to its specific priorities and market conditions," chief executive Alan Joyce said yesterday.

"These measures give us the right structure to address the challenges and opportunities we face, and the right people."

Qantas's domestic airline made an underlying profit before tax of \$552

million in the 2010/11 financial year, while the international business lost \$216 million.

Mr Joyce said the company was committed to turning around the international business through its five-year strategy announced in 2011.

Simon Hickey, the current Qantas frequent flyer chief executive, will head Qantas International.

Lyell Strambi, currently Qantas executive of operations, will be chief executive of Qantas Domestic.

QantasLink operates daily return services between Melbourne and Mildura with connections from all port.

—AAP



Alan Joyce

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