

REX AIRLINES — INTRASTATE AIR ROUTES

440. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the ongoing unreliability of regional air services for communities such as Carnarvon, Monkey Mia, Esperance and Albany, which is impacting on connectivity and affecting vital sectors such as health service delivery, business and personal travel and tourism operators, and to the recent revised profit guidance of the operator Regional Express.

- (1) Has the minister contacted Regional Express to seek assurance that its revised profit guidance will not further constrain its service delivery in regional WA?
- (2) Is she confident that Rex is fulfilling its contractual obligations under its deed of agreement with the government?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

Thank you very much.

- (1)–(2) This government is a very big supporter of regional aviation. We are the government that —

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, member for Roe.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is interesting that members of the Nationals WA are attacking Rex airlines.

In relation to regional aviation, of course, we are the government that brought in the regional airfare zone cap, which limits the cost of travel for regional Western Australians to either \$199 or \$299. We have been working with Aviair and now Nexus Airlines to create new routes. In just over a few weeks, the inaugural flights connecting Geraldton to the north and to Perth through Nexus will commence as a result of state government support. We continue to work with all the airlines.

We understand that Rex had, in a sense, a trading halt two days ago. My team has worked with it over the past 24 hours to ascertain what impact it will have on regional air services. Our understanding currently is that there will be no impact on the flights that Rex delivers. We continue to work with Rex, as we continue to work with all destinations and ports. For example, in Geraldton—where is the member for Geraldton? She is not here. She has obviously caught a plane back! Every port has had issues as airlines recover from the impacts of COVID. They have all had issues in relation to reliability. States and major capital cities have also had issues with reliability. We are constantly working with all the airlines to try to make sure that we have a very reliable airline system, but of course we have also addressed accessibility and affordability, and we will continue to do that.

I find that the aviation market continues to evolve and change, particularly the participants and the challenges. For instance, more generally, globally there is an issue about aircraft availability because of some of the challenges with production caused by COVID. Everyone now wants to fly again, but there is a limited amount of aircraft out there, and, of course, some pilots chose to leave the industry during that time. We continue to work with all of them. As I have said, we are doing everything to make sure that aviation is accessible and affordable throughout regional Western Australia.