

Mayor's speech to welcome REX Airlines to Clarence Valley – 16th February 2007.

Mr Geoff Breust, Managing Director of REX Airlines and your staff, Hon Ian Causley Federal Member for Page, Hon Luke Hartsuyker Federal Member for Cowper, Mr Steve Cansdell State Member for Clarence, councillors Simmons, Lloyd, MacKenzie and Williamson, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Upon behalf of Clarence Valley Council it is my pleasure to welcome you to this opening morning to introduce REX Airlines to the Clarence Valley as today we launch the new Clarence Valley to Sydney REX Airlines service.

REX Airlines is a respected company with a tradition of good service, reliability and first rate reputation. It will provide 64000 seats annually, a choice of 6 flights on weekdays, a good choice of fare options with a majority of seats at \$129 and every tenth flight free, which for frequent flyers will reduce flight costs to around \$116.

REX Airlines and Council have formed a very important partnership. I congratulate Geoff Breust, Managing Director of REX and Council's General Manager Stuart McPherson for the manner in which negotiations were conducted late in 2006 and for the sound outcomes from those negotiations.

Clarence Valley Council strongly supports this new service and the evidence for this is in the initial landing charges holiday, followed by a period of reduced charges, recent terminal upgrade and maintenance works, improved baggage handling and assistance with marketing through access to Council's data base. Additionally on 13th February Council decided that if at all possible councillors and staff should travel REX on council business.

I take the opportunity to thank the Federal Government and our federal parliamentary representatives for the receipt by Council last year of approximately \$117,000 for security upgrading at the airport. I especially thank Luke Hartsuyker for his support. We all realise how important airport security is in these times.

For Council the effective use of the Clarence Valley Regional Airport asset was vitally important and not to use was not an option because the airport is vital to our local economy and future development as well as being a matter of fair access for our citizens to this mode of travel.

It is opportune for REX to be commencing its service to the Valley at this time given that the current draft Mid North Coast Regional Strategy is predicting considerable growth for Grafton city and our coastal towns over the next 25 years. In addition of course KPMG demographer Bernard Salt is describing our Yamba as the top sea change destination in the State of New South Wales which will see high growth levels in that locality.

The current Council initiated Tourism Review and Needs Study, about which there is some controversy, has an important focus upon the need to address more closely tourism destination development regardless of who is to be responsible for such task. Obviously, having a reliable, service focused passenger airline operating in our valley is vitally important to enhancing tourist destination development. The new REX service will help meet that need.

Clarence Valley Council is very confident about our valley's future.

Clarence Valley is on the move. Our gross regional product is increasing at the rate of 3% annually. In the past year our Valley grew 693 jobs, whilst unemployment is down, business confidence is rising and major new investments are delivered, commenced or proposed.

I take this opportunity to appeal to the people of the Clarence Valley to support your Clarence Valley Regional Airport and REX the carrier. This is very much in all our interests.

I am delighted that the Clarence Valley Regional Airport is back in business and warmly welcome REX Airlines to our region. May our partnership and your move here be highly beneficial for REX, for council and the citizens of our great Valley.

Ian Tiley
Mayor Clarence valley Council
16th February 2007.