

Fuel levy another blow for bush



● Rex is set to increase the surcharge on its tickets because of the high price of fuel.

Airline raises ticket prices

By NICK HIGGINS

REGIONAL Express will increase the fuel surcharge on its tickets by \$8.

This follows similar moves by Qantas and Virgin, with the new charge to come into effect on April 20.

Regional Express managing director Mr Geoff Breust said it was the first time a surcharge was being imposed on entry level fares which accounted for a large proportion of the airline's sales.

"Although this is the first application of the fuel levy to our deep discount entry level fares, these fares are still some 25 per cent lower than they were two years ago," Mr Breust said.

"We had wanted to delay the surcharge for these fares for as long as possible as a service to the bush but unfortunately there is a limit to how much a smaller independent airline can absorb."

"Being relatively small our fuel



● Mr Breust

is completely unhedged and we do not enjoy the special volume rates given to the much larger airlines."

Mr Breust said the increases in fuel costs were another blow to regional airline services.

"We are facing increases in costs

for the use of airports, air traffic services including air traffic control, rescue and fire-fighting and security services," he said.

"Costs at regional and country airports are also on the rise. These combined costs are so great that services to some regional communities and indeed the viability of some smaller regional airlines could be put at risk."

"These additional costs are going to impact on regional airline services, so much so that we will be asking the Regional Aviation Association of Australia to call on the Government to undertake a detailed analysis of the cost structure facing the industry."

"The Government's inquiry into regional aviation, The Neville Report, and the regional aviation summit held in Canberra in November last year recommended the Government review the cost pressures affecting the industry."

"We ask that this occurs without delay."

Tests clear cars of hit-and-run

FORENSIC tests carried out on two cars have cleared them of any involvement in a hit-and-run accident on an eight-year-old Sydney girl.

An anonymous letter passed on to police last Friday gave the registrations of two cars, including one that allegedly hit Georgina Woods.

"As a result of information passed on to police, two vehicles — a red SEAT and a black Honda — were impounded and forensically examined in a bid to determine whether they were linked to the hit-run incident," Chief Supt John Hartley said yesterday.

"Tests have now

revealed that neither vehicle was involved in last Monday night's fail-to-stop collision."

The author of the letter claimed to have witnessed the incident, with his wife and family members.

Georgina has brain damage and is in a coma in the Sydney Children's Hospital after suffering head injuries, compound fractures and bleeding lungs.

Supt Hartley said it was back to square one for investigators, whose only witnesses were two boys aged six and 10.

He renewed an appeal for witnesses to come forward, along with the author of the letter.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Children's workshop a feature

THE intricacies and craft of quilting will be on display during an exhibition at The Scots School.

Co-ordinator of the Murray River Quilters exhibition Mrs Margaret Parkinson said the exhibition would showcase quilts demonstrating the different techniques of the craft.

A special feature will be children's quilting workshops.

The workshops will be on Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 2pm with a \$5 fee for materials.

A quilt made by more than half of the Murray River Quilters will be raffled over the weekend.

The quilt was runner-up in the group quilters category at the most



● Mrs Parkinson with the quilt to be raffled.

recent Victorian quilters' exhibition.

The exhibition opens with a food and wine evening on Friday and will be open on Saturday

from 9am to 5pm and on Sunday from 10am to 4pm in the chapel hall.

Admission is \$5 and school-aged children free.

Take to toads with bats: MP



● Mr Tollner wants action.

A FEDERAL MP wants Northern Territory parents to arm their children with cricket bats and golf clubs and smash cane toads for six.

Mr David Tollner, of the Country Liberal Party, said locals should be killing the toxic pests any way they can as they march quickly towards Darwin.

But animal rights activists have labelled the bludgeoning cruel, while toad experts believe cane toad cricket or golf possibly won't kill enough of the warty creatures.

"My view is, stop the political correctness, just go and arm the kids of the territory with cricket bats and send them to work," Mr Tollner, who grew up killing toads in Queensland, said.

"It seems okay for native animals to go around and eat these things and die horrible deaths."

"I think they are a toxic, noxious pest and we need to get rid of them any way we possibly can."

Top kick-off for youth week

THE top of Australia's highest peak Mt Kosciuszko seemed a fitting place to celebrate the beginning of National Youth Week.

Member for Farrer and Parliamentary Secretary for Children and Youth Affairs Mrs Sussan Ley joined a group of young people at 2229m above sea level to kick off the annual event.

"National Youth Week is Australia's largest youth celebration, with events for young people happening all over the country," she said.

Mrs Ley said young people across Australia had the chance to get involved in a range of activities including exhibitions, conferences,



● Mrs Ley on top of Mt Kosciuszko.

dance parties and sporting events.

"National Youth Week is an opportunity for young people across Australia to participate

in activities where they can meet new people and learn new skills."

For more information go to www.youth-week.com.

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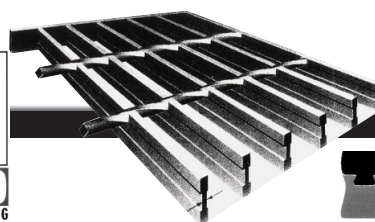
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