



ESSENDON PLANNING FOR SECURITY SCREENING IN FIRST QUARTER OF 2016 FOR JETGO FLIGHTS

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Essendon Airport is hopeful of having the appropriate **security screening** facilities in place for Jetgo to begin flights from Dubbo in the first quarter of 2016.

Jetgo had planned to fly from Dubbo to Melbourne Tullamarine starting in late October but was unable to secure terminal space at the airport. Moves to operate into nearby Essendon Airport then hit a roadblock because of a lack of passenger screening facilities and regulatory hurdles from the Office of Transport Security OTS).

Eventually, the regional carrier launched its Melbourne service at Avalon Airport, which is accommodating Jetgo's three flights a week from Dubbo on a temporary basis while security facilities were being set up at Essendon.

Currently, Essendon Airport has regular public transport (RPT) service from Free Spirit Airlines, Par Avion Airlines and Sharp Airlines, serving regional centres such as Griffith, Flinders Island and Merimbula.

Those services do not require passenger security screening and Essendon Airport chief executive Chris Cowan said the airport was working on a solution that did not impact the existing airlines at the facility.

“We are looking to do this in an efficient way that doesn’t disadvantage the other operators here,” Essendon Airport chief executive Chris Cowan told *Australian Aviation* in an interview.

“It can’t diminish the ability of the other regional operators to come in here and operate in a fairly low-key regional environment which they enjoy.

“We will see an answer to that in the first quarter of next year.”

Cowan said passenger numbers at the airport had increased from 10,000 to 40,000 a year over the past 18 months, highlighting the attractiveness of Essendon for regional services.

There is scope for further growth given the main passenger terminal at Essendon was built to handle 200,000 passengers a year.

Further, Essendon provides a shuttle bus to nearby Tullamarine for regional passengers connecting onto domestic or international flights.

“While it is off quite a low base it is quite a substantial increase and it does reflect that there is further opportunities for regional services from Essendon,” Cowan said.

“It is quite a good sign for the future.

“When you talk about regional passengers flying from Essendon it makes sense to most people.”

The airport has spent about \$20 million on runway overlays and two new hangars at the airport in recent times.

OTS regulations require passengers on regular public transport service (RPT) with Jetgo’s ERJ-135 regional jets go through security given they have a maximum take off weight of 20,000kg.



A Jetgo Embraer ERJ135. (Jetgo)

Jetgo managing director for airlines Paul Bredereck has said previously the airline had unsuccessfully sought a short-term exemption until the facilities at Essendon could be upgraded, given its aircraft was right on the maximum takeoff weight limit.

“It is the only 36-seat RPT aircraft in the country that requires security screening,” Bredereck said in October.

“We initially expected that we could install security screening appropriate for that airport, and Jetgo would have amended its transport security plans.

“We thought that would have been a reasonably straightforward exercise. As it’s turned out, the process is more complicated than what we expected and OTS require significantly more work to be compliant with that.

“Essendon for us is a good option, we are quite happy to pay for the security screening that is required but OTS have indicated that their requirements are far more onerous than what we had originally expected.”

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