

Air Pac maintains customer base

By **KELERA SERELINI**

The national airline will do its best to maintain its existing passengers travelling from Brisbane to Fiji and vice versa.

This follows an announcement by Pacific Blue to introduce two more services in June from Australia to Fiji.

Air Pacific chief executive officer John Campbell said they would compete with Pacific Blue to maintain its customer base.

"Air Pacific currently operates eight flights weekly to Brisbane and quite naturally will be competitive with Pacific Blue in maintaining our existing customer base whilst further growing visitor arrivals to Fiji and Fiji residents travel to Brisbane," said Mr. Campbell. Air Pacific currently operates 22 return flights weekly to Australia.

The decision by Pacific Blue to boost its services followed an ongoing and steady demand for Fiji flights, with strong growth experienced for direct flights from Sydney and Brisbane. Since launching its flights in September 2004, the airline has deliv-

ered more than 161,000 Australian tourists to Fiji who injected over FJD\$252million to the local economy.

Statistics revealed more good news for Fiji with a strong performance in passenger market growth.

These include the Brisbane -Fiji passenger market having grown by 66,684 passengers or 82 per cent since Pacific Blue's entry on this route.

The Sydney - Fiji passenger market grew by 59, 143 passengers or 26 per cent. The number of Australian residents travelling to Fiji increased by 23.4 per cent.

Holiday segments grew by 28 per cent.

Virgin Blue chief commercial officer Stefan Pichler said "concerns of a tourism downturn due to past political unrest seem to be completely unfounded and in fact, Fiji has become one of Pacific Blue's key destinations for international visitors.

"We're very pleased that Pacific Blue has been able to contribute significantly to the increase in tourism numbers which in turn has economic , job opportunities and business spin offs for the people of Fiji.