

VIRGIN TO SELL ENTIRE FOKKER 50 FLEET

News / Airlines



Virgin Australia's regional arm is disposing of its eight **Fokker** 50s and adding four Fokker 100s and an Airbus A320 as part of **fleet** and operational changes in Western Australia.

The 46-seat Fokker 50s have been used to serve West Australian government regulated routes to Albany, Esperance and Ravensthorpe in the state's south west, as well as regular public transport (RPT) flights to Geraldton and charter and fly-in/fly-out services to other centres in the state.

However, with Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA) confirming in September it would not bid to continue Albany, Esperance and Ravensthorpe in the current tender, as well as the changing nature of the mining sector given the transition from mining construction to production, the Fokker 50s have become surplus to requirements.

"Following an extensive review, the decision has been made to decommission and dispose of the airline's eight Fokker 50 aircraft in the first half of 2016 due to a negative commercial outlook for its F50 operations," Virgin said in a statement.

"The Virgin Australia Group continually reviews our operations, including our fleet, to ensure optimal utilisation and to meet customer demand."

It was anticipated that the Perth-Geraldton route would be upgraded to the Fokker 100. Moreover,

the cabin interiors of all 14 of the 100-seat aircraft were currently being upgraded.

Two of the four additional Fokker 100s Virgin was intending to acquire have already arrived in the fleet, after the airline purchased two Fokker 100s from Alliance Aviation in May.

The one additional A320 would increase Virgin's number of the type to three.



A Virgin Australia Fokker 100, Fokker 50 and A320 at Perth Airport. (Chris Frame)

While there is a net reduction of three aircraft in the VARA fleet with the disposal of eight Fokker 50s offset by the acquisition of four Fokker 100s and one A320, the introduction of larger aircraft represented an overall increase in capacity.

The addition of the bigger Fokker 100 and A320s also reflected the withdrawal of some smaller mining players, who used the Fokker 50 to fly their workers to the mines, and the ongoing need of larger capacity aircraft for the major miners.

Virgin will cease flights to Albany, Esperance and Ravensthorpe on February 27 2016, when its current contract with the WA government ends.

Regional Express and Skippers Aviation were understood to have applied for the Perth-Albany and Perth-Esperance routes, with the WA government expected to announce the results of the tender before the end of 2015.

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