



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Ian Macdonald**

**Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy,  
Minister for Mineral Resources, Minister for State Development**

### **First sod turned on \$25 million pilot training academy at Wagga**

NSW Minister for State Development Ian Macdonald today helped turn the first sod of soil on a new \$25 million development at Wagga Wagga, which aims to make the Riverina city an Asia Pacific leader in pilot training.

The Australian Airline Pilot Academy for Regional Express (Rex), Australia's largest independent regional airline, will generate significant work for local contractors and suppliers.

"This academy will be a great asset to the Riverina, it will provide an economic boost to Wagga and employ 70 people when finished," Mr Macdonald said.

"It will have the capacity to produce more than 200 professional pilots a year for Regional Express, as well as other airlines operating in growing Asia Pacific markets, including China.

"Rex, in partnership with the City of Wagga Wagga, announced in February that its Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA) would relocate to Wagga from Mangalore in Victoria.

"The development application for the facility was approved in June and I am pleased to help officially start construction today.

"The NSW Government has helped secure the investment at Wagga Wagga Airport through assistance provided by the Department of State and Regional Development.

"The Government is working hard to create more jobs and secure new business, tourism and investment opportunities in regional NSW."

The Australian Airline Pilot Academy is already operating in Wagga Wagga out of temporary accommodation, with the first local graduation of trainees occurring last month.

The Academy includes a unique Rex Pilot Cadetship scheme and offers an intensive live-in training program which allows students to graduate with a Commercial Pilots Licence, a Multi Engine Rating and Command Instrument Rating within 32 weeks.

Mr Macdonald said Wagga Wagga is an ideal location for the academy because of its central location between Sydney and Melbourne.

“With more than 60,000 residents, the city has good services and has excellent education and training facilities with Charles Sturt University, the Kapooka Army Recruit Training Base, and the Riverina Institute of TAFE,” he said.

“The Australian Airline Pilot Academy will also complement Rex's current Wagga Wagga workforce of about 100 which includes engineering maintenance for the Rex fleet of Saab 340 aircraft.”

Rex Managing Director and AAPA Chairman Jim Davis said: “The assistance and encouragement from the NSW Government was a key factor in our decision to relocate the Academy from Mangalore in Victoria to Wagga Wagga in NSW.

“Rex has not forgotten the assistance provided by the NSW Government when we were fighting to re-establish ourselves after the collapse of Ansett and we are happy to be able to repay that confidence in some small measure by the establishment of the Australian Airline Pilot Academy in NSW,” Mr Davis said.

The academy will include training and simulator rooms, offices and 92 bedrooms for trainee pilots and stewards, as well as communal and recreational facilities on the 2.5-hectare site.

Phase 1 is scheduled for completion by the first quarter of 2010 and final completion is scheduled for 2014.

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