

## Between GA and the airlines

While not the first airline in the country to do so, Regional Express (Rex) has created a highly professional niche pilot training organisation with its Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA). The Wagga-based AAPA has demonstrated its ability to train quality airline pilots through the successful implementation of a pilot cadet program specially customised for Rex, Australia's largest independent regional airline, operating a fleet of more than 45 Saab 340s.

The AAPA Rex cadet program enables ab initio students to graduate with a CPL and MECIR within a mere 32 weeks. To date, 106 cadets have been enrolled in the program, with 82 successfully completing the course and 56 checked to line and flying on scheduled operations as Saab 340 First Officers.

With its new, multi-million dollar campus at Wagga officially opened only last year, AAPA boasts a state-of-the-art, fully self-contained facility featuring:

- An academic centre with modern classrooms, examination rooms;
- A hangar on a 3000sqm site that includes aircraft parking and maintenance facilities, flight training centre with briefing rooms and flight operations support;
- Modern accommodation facilities where all students are housed in air-conditioned individual rooms;
- A fully equipped kitchen and canteen with both indoor dining and outdoor alfresco dining that can seat up to 250 students; and
- Both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities including student lounges, a heated swimming pool, gymnasium, soccer field and a multi-purpose hardcourt to ensure students have a complete and balanced life during their training.

As well as the new facilities, AAPA has one of the youngest fleets – 16 Piper Warriors and four Piper Seminoles, each fitted with glass cockpits – in the country, as well as modern ELITE iGATE flight simulators. And the AAPA's location lends itself to professional pilot training, with Wagga Airport's mix of air traffic as well as its Cat 1 ILS.

"We get a lot of traffic here, but it's a different type of traffic," CFI/CP Geoff Cook explains. "So students have to interact with military pilots and RPT pilots, and from my point of view that's the better training environment, rather than being in an area where you're only dealing with other training aircraft."



ABOVE: Graduates of the AAPA's pilot cadet program walk straight into a First Officer position on one of Rex's Saab 340 upon graduation.