

In the local Wiradjuri Aboriginal language, 'Wagga' means 'crow' and 'Wagga Wagga' translates to 'place of many crows'.

Today, not only big black birds but also cadet pilots fly in and out of the Riverina city of Wagga, New South Wales.

Based in Wagga, the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA), together with parent company Rex Airlines, offers aspiring young pilots the opportunity to study at and graduate from a world-class training facility.

Since AAPA opened in 2007, 188 Rex cadets have graduated from the Academy and gone on to begin their professional flying careers with Rex Airlines. An additional 93 international cadets have also graduated, going on to fly with Air Arabia.

HONORARY GUESTS

The Australian government is supportive of international education and training in the aviation industry, especially in regional Australia. In November 2016, the new AAPA cadets for 2017 were presented with their epaulettes by the Hon. Darren Chester MP, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, and local MP Michael McCormack, federal Member for Riverina and Minister for Small Business.



The Hon. Darren Chester MP in the simulator.



From left: Chris Hine, The Hon. Darren Chester MP, The Hon. John Sharp and The Hon. Michael McCormack MP.



Above: Inspecting the aircraft prior to flight; Below: The Piper Seminole used as part of the course.

Minister Chester addressed the 33 cadets, hailing from Australia, Vietnam and Hong Kong, urging them to make the most of the opportunity to train in a world-class facility in regional Australia. Sharing words of wisdom, he encouraged the cadets to combine a "positively contagious" attitude with commitment to safety and support of one another.

"I'm excited to see the young people here working hard to become the aviators of our future," Minister Chester said.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Both Ministers joined the cadets on a tour of

the AAPA training facility. The group stopped to admire the SAAB 340 A/B Full Motion Simulator, one of only nine such simulators in the world.

A common theme among the cadets was their eagerness to get behind the controls of the Piper Warrior III (single-engine) and Piper Seminole (twin-engine) aircraft, which they will learn to fly as part of their course.

Minister McCormack is immensely supportive of Rex's \$11.7 million contribution to the Australian Airline Pilot Academy's infrastructure and equipment.

"It's a massive investment from Rex into the future of Wagga Wagga and is a great program for Regional Australia, which provides ongoing commitment to young pilots," he said. "Rex should be recognised for the great work they are doing."

Minister Chester sees the funds invested as benefitting not only regional Australia but also the future of aviation in general.

PASSION FOR FLIGHT

Passion, focus and determination – all three are in copious supply among the academy's new cadets.

"I've wanted to be a pilot since I was a little kid," says Brendan Jones, aged 24, from New South Wales. "It provides a great career opportunity and I'll always be able to progress in terms of aviation experience."

Nineteen-year-old Jason Dapozzo, also from NSW, says, "It's the only thing I've ever wanted to do. It's looking at the sky and seeing the scientific beauty in how a heavy aircraft can sustain lift. It's pure three-dimensional freedom, and nothing in the world could compare to becoming a pilot."

Each cadet has come through a rigorous



Vietnamese cadet pilot Long Vu meeting The Hon. Darren Chester MP.



"AAPA is extremely proud and honoured to be trusted to train future pilots for Vietnam Airlines, and this reaffirms AAPA's position as one of the world's best pilot training facilities"

interview and testing process to earn a place at this world-class facility. The atmosphere at the Academy is infectious purposeful. Every single cadet is committed to becoming an integral part of aviation, and is equally committed to safety.

FROM HANOI TO WAGGA WAGGA

"I live and dream to fly high," says Long Vu, 28, one of 15 Vietnamese cadets who arrived in Wagga Wagga to a large welcoming party.

Long Vu says he pictured Melbourne or Sydney as 'Australia', but was thrilled to land in the much smaller regional city, describing his first impression of Wagga Wagga as "fresh weather and beautiful nature".

After bustling Hanoi, in Vietnam, Long finds the open landscape of Wagga the perfect place to begin his training and, in time,

achieve his dream of becoming a pilot.

"The College has friendly and welcoming people, clean and tidy facilities – and I may see here as my second home," he says.

Long Vu is looking forward to exploring Wagga Wagga when he and his fellow cadets get some free time.

Following the completion of their training and graduation, the Vietnamese cadets will be eligible for admission into Vietnam Airlines.

BOOSTING GLOBAL AVIATION

"AAPA is extremely proud and honoured to be trusted to train future pilots for Vietnam Airlines, and this reaffirms AAPA's position as one of the world's best pilot training facilities," Chris Hine, AAPA Chairman, Executive Director and Group Flight Operations, said.

"We have seen a steady stream of

Vietnamese cadets choose AAPA as their training school, and the word of mouth from cadets has been instrumental in receiving more enrolments.

"Training at world-class facilities in Wagga boosts the aviation sector and it also benefits regional tourism, with the airline cadets using the local amenities during their stay," he said.

"The cadet pilots from Vietnam are a wonderful addition to AAPA and Wagga Wagga, and it is rewarding to be part of the international aviation environment."

The Hon. Darren Chester MP added, "Given AAPA was established only 10 years ago, there is a strong sign that these global opportunities will continue to grow."

The Minister said he was thrilled to see the future of aviation in such good hands. 16



Rex cadets meeting The Hon. Darren Chester MP.