

READY FOR

TAKE-OFF

It would be remiss of us, with our special flying school supplement this issue, not to mention one of the largest investments in Australian flight training in recent times. The \$25 million cash injection, staggered over five years, has created a state of the art training facility at Wagga Wagga (the AAPA) which includes student accommodation, leisure facilities, the academy itself and a flight simulator. Run by Regional Express, the academy is destined to train about 200 pilots a year and is being proclaimed as one of the leading flight training centres in the entire Asia-Pacific region. The campus intends to train overseas pilots as well as home-grown aviators: the rigorous demands of a multi-crew environment will be taught alongside basic flying skills, filling a niche in the current market. Ironically, it was only three years ago when we reported on the acute pilot shortage almost crippling REX airlines however, their Managing Director, Jim Davis, claims it was this very situation that prompted the investment in the academy: "It's hard to believe that only 10 months ago this was just a bare paddock. It was a dream borne out of the pilot shortage in 2007 which threatened the very existence of REX."

Work first commenced on the \$12 million state-of-the-art campus in July 2009 and was completed in quick time by May 2010. Anthony Albanese, Minister for Transport, officially opened the academy and used the opportunity to announce a major government investment of \$1.1 million to assist Wagga Wagga council in installing an Instrument Landing System (ILS), technology which will enable the city's airport to remain open during adverse weather conditions. Together with the new academy, this represents a major boost for regional aviation and pilot training.

Jim Davis, also Chairman of the AAPA, is delighted: "Wagga Wagga can be proud that it is now firmly placed on the world map of aviation with the establishment of a first class airline pilot training facility which we believe will rank amongst the best in the world."

"The Academy features complete and integrated facilities right at the airport and a campus that is designed to cater for the complete academic and physical well being of the cadets. It boasts a swimming pool, gym and outdoor sports facilities alongside modern classrooms and well equipped individual bedrooms. Also in a few short months the airport will have a fully operational Instrument Landing System the same as those at any major international airport."

The future now looks exceedingly bright...

