



## REGIONAL EXPRESS

CELEBRATES THE 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR AIRLINE PILOT ACADEMY



// AUSTRALIA

Australia's Regional Express (Rex) is a unique Saab 340 operator in many ways. Not only are they the largest, by far. They also had the foresight to start their own pilot academy - Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA), ten years ago, right in the middle of a recession when few could see the pilot-shortage crisis looming in the future.

During the post 9/11 period, air travel declined so significantly that layoffs and pay cuts was the rule, and the average starting pay for regional pilots was around USD \$20K. Today, entry level pay for a regional first officer in the U.S. is around \$60K and signing bonuses are not uncommon.

Boeing predicts the need for over 600,000 new pilots worldwide for the next two decades. This will affect regional carriers the hardest as many pilots ultimate goal is to be a major airline pilot. Industry analysts typically believe that regional carriers and small cargo operators will have to replace 10 to 15 percent of their pilot workforce each year

for the foreseeable future due to demand from the major airlines, coupled with attrition, retirements and fleet growth. Those without the resources, or the backing of a major airline to attract and retain pilots, may not make it.

So how has Rex countered this? Rex started the unique Pilot Cadet Programme in December 2007 in an endeavour to combat a world-wide pilot shortage that very few saw coming and even fewer acted upon. Cadet pilots are put through a rigorous selection process, which includes a situational awareness and stress tolerance test, simulator assessment and panel interview with senior management from the Rex Group. The results of all interviews are then forwarded to the Executive Chairman of the Rex Group,



Mr Lim Kim Hai, who scrutinises the results to ensure the applicant has all the innate attributes demanded by Rex and are deserving of such a life-changing opportunity of being accepted into AAPA as a Cadet and ultimately graduating to the rank of First Officer with Rex. Those who are selected and successfully complete the training at AAPA are granted a job with Rex for as long as they wish, however, they must serve a minimum of 7 years return of service after graduating from AAPA.

After initially commencing operations in Mangalore, Victoria, AAPA constructed a state of the art pilot training academy located at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales and the new facility was officially opened in May 2010.

Rex has invested over \$35 million in AAPA, making it a world class training facility within the Asia Pacific region, equipped with state of the art facilities, including a fleet of 20 new Piper Warrior and Seminole aircraft, modern flight simulators, including a SAAB 340 Full Flight Simulator, which was opened in 2014 and an Instrument Landing System (ILS) equipped runway commissioned in 2010.

AAPA is approved and on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS), and is an Approved Training Organisation (ATO) by the General Civil Aviation Authority of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam (CAAV) and an approved Supplier to Vietnam Airlines, with the first 8 Vietnamese cadets graduating in May 2017.

Graduates complete an intensive training program, from ab-initio, to graduating with an Australian Commercial Pilots Licence and Multi Engine Command Instrument Rating issued by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).



“ WE HAVE GRADUATED CADET PILOTS THAT NOW MAKE UP 79% OF REX'S FIRST OFFICERS AND 30% OF REX'S CAPTAINS ”

Since 2007, over 220 Rex Cadets have graduated from AAPA, and subsequently transitioned into Rex and its subsidiaries in the rank of First Officer.

“AAPA is a world class facility providing the highest quality of standards and disciplines in airline pilot training and thanks to the dedicated and tireless work of all our staff we have graduated cadet pilots that now make up 79% of Rex's First Officers and 30% of Rex's Captains as well as many pilots for major airlines around the world.” says Mr Chris Hine, AAPA Chairman.

### REGIONAL EXPRESS//

Regional Express (Rex) is Australia's largest independent regional airline operating a fleet of more than 50 Saab 340 aircraft on some 1,500 weekly flights to 60 destinations throughout all states in Australia. The Rex Group also include Pel-Air Aviation (air freight and charter operator), Air Link (Dubbo-based regional airline) and the Australian Airline Pilot Academy.

**Saab fleet:**  
58 Saab 340

**Other types:**  
Beechcraft Super Kingair 200  
Beechcraft 1900D  
Westwind II