



GETTING THEIR WINGS: Director of Australian Airline Pilot Academy Chris Hine presents the Regional Express cadet pilot graduates with their wings.

Pictures: Oscar Colman



FLYING COLOURS: Regional Express graduate pilot Emily Chadwick enjoys the moment after receiving her wings at the graduation ceremony yesterday.

Rex cadets receive wings

By PATRICK WOOD

New pilots celebrate graduation

CADETS of Regional Express Airlines (Rex) celebrated the culmination of a year of study and hard work at their graduation ceremony at Wagga airport yesterday.

The graduate pilots received their 'wings' in front of an unusually high-profile crowd including state and local members of parliament and aviation legends who had earlier attended the official opening of a new \$25 million aviation education facility.

Officers used the event to

highlight the high level of professionalism and passion pilots must have in order to begin a career in aviation.

The Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA) trains cadets at the Wagga airport and will move into the new campus when it takes on the next round of recruits.

Director of the AAPA Chris Hine told the gathering the new Rex-funded campus was important for ensuring the future

of pilots at smaller airlines.

"We realised we need to master our own destiny and not be at the mercy of the big end of town," he said.

"This has secured our future supply of pilots."

Chairman of Airservices Australia David Forsyth followed and said airline-specific training programs, rather than general training curriculums, were a great way to train budding pilots.

"In-house training ... (provides) a better culture, better training and better attitude," he said.

In particular, Rex's executives' decision to build their own training campus in response to its pilot shortage demonstrated a strong-willed approach.

"It was a roll-up-your-sleeves, get-in-and-do-it-yourself attitude, rather than running off and asking the government for help," he said.

Rex cadet pilot and recipient of the Chairman Award, Robert Vonow, delivered a speech in which he told of life as an aspiring pilot.

"(All cadets) shared that dream to become a pilot," he said.

Mr Vonow said the journey had been "thoroughly enjoyable" and thanked Rex for allowing him to "realise a dream".

Rex managing director and chairman of the AAPA Jim Davis told the graduates that being a pilot was a "professional career, and (that) it's a proud job".