

Rex invests tremendous faith in Wagga

RARELY are great visions transformed into reality but yesterday's opening of the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA) in Wagga was a rare and exciting exception.

Regional Express Airlines (Rex) has shown tremendous faith in this city with its \$25 million investment.

Strangely, yesterday's opening of the pilot academy came from what was one of the airline's toughest operating periods.

Just a few years ago the airline industry boomed, smaller regional players such as Rex found it difficult to hold on to its pilots leading to flight cancellations.

As one speaker said at yesterday's opening, many would have turned to government for a solution but true to its spirit of rolling up the sleeves and getting on with it, Rex embarked on one of the most ambitious projects in Australian aviation – to create its own pilot school.

Even while the state-of-the-art facility was being built at Wagga airport, Rex cadets were in training – two more classes graduating yesterday and providing this country's largest regional airline with a steady flow of talented pilots.

And the icing on the cake was yesterday's confirmation by the federal government that it would contribute just over \$1 million towards the installation of an instrument landing system (ILS) at the airport – this being the final piece in what has been a complex jigsaw puzzle.

There were many groups and individuals who have played key roles in creating this amazing facility including federal member for Riverina Kay Hull and the Wagga City Council.

One person who didn't seek adulation but has shown amazing tenacity and courage to initiate the project is Rex executive chairman Lim Kim Hai.

With the support of his board, he has given Wagga an amazing asset that will allow people to have their dreams realised and provide an important building block in the construction of this region's aviation industry.

As a nursery for pilots around Australia and indeed the world, the heart of Rex may well remain in the country but its presence will now be felt around the world.