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MEDIA RELEASE

REX AND AAPA CELEBRATE GRADUATION OF FIRST GROUP OF VIETNAMESE CADET PILOTS

Regional Express (Rex) will tomorrow celebrate the graduation of the first group of Vietnamese cadets trained at its pilot academy, the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA) in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

The Hon. Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs will officiate at the event as the Guest of Honour in the presence of other distinguished guests including the Federal Member for Riverina and Minister for Small Business, Consulate General of the Vietnam Embassy in Sydney, CEO of Viet Flight Training (VFT), Mayor and Councillors of Wagga Wagga City Council, Chief Commissioner of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), Chairman and Directors of the Board of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia (CASA), President of Boeing Australia & South Pacific, Chairman and CEO of the Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA) as well as other airline, community and business leaders.

After 10 months of intensive training, the cadets are graduating with a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) with Instrument Rating – Multi Engine Aeroplane (IR-MEA) issued by CASA. As AAPA is accredited with the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam as well as Vietnam Airlines, the graduates will now be eligible for admission into Vietnam Airlines as airline pilots after their aircraft type endorsements.

The training at AAPA is the result of a partnership with VFT, a company of Vietnam Airlines, whereby the cadets first undergo theory training to an Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) level in Vietnam at VFT before coming to AAPA to undergo their flight training and complete all the CASA theory and flight tests.

AAPA Chairman Chris Hine said, “This is a special time and AAPA is extremely proud and honoured to have been trusted to train future airline pilots for Vietnam Airlines, and this reaffirms AAPA’s position as one of the world’s best pilot training facilities. The cadet pilots from Vietnam are a wonderful addition to AAPA, and it is rewarding to be part of the international aviation environment.”

VFT CEO Captain Nguyen Nam Lien said “This graduation is very special and is the culmination of many months of hard work by the graduating cadets. I know that these cadets have been trained to the highest standards and I express my appreciation for AAPA’s professionalism and efforts. This graduation is a significant first achievement for both organisations, AAPA and VFT, as it demonstrates that a high-quality, self-sponsored commercial pilot training scheme can work for aspiring Vietnamese cadets and it lays the foundation for a fruitful cooperation ahead.”

“It is a great honour to be celebrating what will be an unforgettable milestone in the life of seven Vietnamese young men. I can promise them from my personal experience that this is just the beginning of an exciting time ahead” Captain Lien added.

In addition to the graduation of these Vietnamese cadets, two batches of Rex cadets will also be graduating tomorrow. This is the 19th and 20th group of cadets trained at its academy since 2008. These cadets have completed a 32 week ab-initio course and have obtained their CPL with IR-MEA before joining the Rex Group as First Officers.

Regional Express

Since 2007 AAPA has enrolled 21 batches – approximately 200 cadets – under the Rex Pilot Cadet programme. Of these 158 are currently checked to line and flying as fully qualified First Officers on scheduled operations within the Rex group of companies and a total of 56 have progressed to become Captains.

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 58 destinations throughout all states in Australia. In addition to the regional airline Regional Express, the **Rex Group** comprises wholly owned subsidiaries **Pel-Air Aviation** (air freight and charter operator), **Air Link** (Dubbo-based regional airline) and the **Australian Airline Pilot Academy**.

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