

THE RIVERINA'S ONLY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2014

PRICE: \$1.50

The Daily Advertiser



Ready for takeoff

Daniel Turnoch, James Horsmann, Simon King, Ashley Lewis, Nicholas Potter and Brendan Suen had plenty of reason to smile yesterday. They graduated from Australian Airline Pilot Academy along with 13 others.

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Pilots ready to wing it in sky

STORIES BY
ALEX McCONACHIE

AS A child, Simon King would often look up at the sky and dream of soaring through it as an airline pilot.

Yesterday, he took a big step to fulfilling that dream, graduating from the Australian Airline Pilot Academy operated by Regional Express (Rex), along with 18 of his fellow students.

Before entering the academy, Mr King spent a decade working part-time at Albury Airport as a ground handler for Rex, further solidifying his desire to become a pilot.

"Being out at the airport for as long as I was, (the drive) comes from the people you're around, and it's the same with the course," he said.

"It's a lightbulb moment - you only get one shot at what you want to do, so let's make the most of it."

Mr King graduated the course with flying colours, as captain of his class, and was presented with the Chairman's Award at yesterday's graduation, which recognises academic performance and contribution to the peer group.

Fellow graduate Alice Rocuet shared a similar goal to Mr King growing up.

She was born in France, before moving to Singapore, but she came to Australia to realise her dream.

"I knew I had more opportunities in Australia," she said.

"I went to Australia and applied for cadetships and started flying on my own, in case I didn't get a cadetship."

Ms Rocuet will be based in Melbourne once she completes ground school and simulator training, and may even turn up flying the Melbourne-Wagga route for Rex one day soon.

"They usually use the Wagga crew to go to Melbourne but you never know, you might see me," she said.

Rex deputy chairman John Sharp said the group of 19 soon-to-be pilots graduating were the "cream of the crop".

"They've been selected from an enormous field of candidates, more than 10,000, to be one of less than 200 people to go through the process of being trained as regular public transport commercial pilots," he said.

"The quality of pilots we produce are now proving to be extremely high."



DREAM COME TRUE: Simon King has dreamed of being a pilot since he was a child.
Pictures: Les Smith



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It's a lightbulb moment - you only get one shot at what you want to do, so let's make the most of it.

Australian Airline Pilot Academy
graduate Simon King

zacharia naumann
optometry

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SKY'S THE LIMIT
(left): Alice Rocuet
(right) graduated from
the Australian Airline
Pilot Academy on
Wednesday, with her
sister Claire, 16,
coming to watch.

TAKING FLIGHT
(below): Regional
Express deputy
chairman John Sharp
chats to Defence
Minister Senator David
Johnston at the
Australian Airline Pilot
Academy graduation as
graduate Ella Hodgins
suits up for photo
opportunities.

