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Australian foreign affairs minister Julie Bishop in Wagga for the Rex Australian Airline Pilot Academy graduation

<http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/4657765/visa-change-no-threat-to-rex-pilots-says-julie-bishop-photos-video/>

Australia's foreign affairs minister says tougher restrictions on 457 visas won't leave a hole in the local jobs market.

The deputy leader of the federal Liberal Party Julie Bishop was in Wagga yesterday to celebrate the first group of Vietnamese cadets trained at the Regional Express (Rex) Australian Airline Pilot Academy.

The regional airline heavily recruits overseas workers and has been vocal against changes to the visa, saying it may be forced to shut down marginal routes, including the Narrandera-Leeton to Sydney service.

Ms Bishop said the government was replacing the 457 visa with two further visas and they would focus on skills shortages.

At the REX cadet graduation ceremony. pic.twitter.com/hzeMMY2YnR

— The Daily Advertiser (@DailyAdvertiser) [May 12, 2017](#)

"We want Australians to take jobs here and we have set up a skills training fund so that employers can assist Australians who want a job," she said.

"But where there is a genuine skills shortage of course we want the employers in Australia to have to opportunity to bring in skilled workers."

Ms Bishop said she has spoken with Rex deputy chairman John Sharp to assure the airline if there are genuine skills shortages the government can "review the occupation risk from time to time".

"We want to make sure the 457 visa class is not abused ..." she said.

"If there isn't an Australian available to do (a job) of course we support employers bringing in skilled workers from overseas."

After 10 months of intensive training, 24 pilots – 17 from Australia and seven from Vietnam received their epaulettes.

Member for Riverina Michael McCormack said the ceremony was a "milestone occasion".

"The relationship between Hanoi and Wagga Wagga has been sealed – a bridge permanently concreted," Mr McCormack said.

"Rex has once again confirmed how important an organisation it is for the city."

One of the happy graduates, Alice Yatsevich, said the significance of the occasion was hard to put into words.

“It’s overwhelming. There are very few words to describe it,” Ms Yatsevich said.

“It is an incredible sense of achievement.”

The 26-year-old said the next step for her was to move into the public transport sector.

“The sky is the limit.”

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