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Australia's Rex to own 100% of flying school

By Leithen Francis

Australian regional carrier Regional Express (Rex) has decided to take full ownership of the pilot training school it established late last year.

The Civil Aviation Training Academy (CATA) was a joint venture between Rex and Mangalore Airport, where the school is based, but in a statement today Rex says it has been agreed that Rex will buy out Mangalore Airport and gain full ownership of the venture. Mangalore is located in country Victoria outside Melbourne.

Rex's statement fails to mention why the airline is moving to full ownership. But it quotes Rex acting managing director, Jim Davis, as saying "it was felt by the boards of both companies [Mangalore Airport and Rex] that the full acquisition would be in the interests of the academy".

The statement says the academy will be renamed the Australian Airline Pilots Academy.

It also says the academy will continue to be based at Mangalore Airport and the airport will work closely with the academy to ensure the venture is a complete success.

The academy enrolled its second batch of 23 cadets on 7 April, bringing the total to 39, and the first batch are due to graduate later this year and commence their conversion training on Rex's Saab 340 aircraft, it adds.

Rex operates a fleet of 37 Saab 340s and currently has a shortage of pilots, which is why it established its own pilot training school.

The airline issued a statement in November last year saying Moorabbin Flying Services would also be an equity partner but a Rex spokeswoman in Sydney says "that was the plan at the time but it was only two partners that came on board" in the end.