

# Graduate pilots set to take to the air

By Alex McConachie

THEY came from all walks of life, but the Australian Airline Pilot Academy's 18 newest graduates all share a love for flying.

The 18 pilots graduated from an intensive 60-week course at a ceremony at Wagga Airport yesterday, with family and friends gathered to celebrate their achievements.

They will now deploy in centres from Albury to Adelaide as Regional Express' (Rex) newest pilots, with some to be based right here at Wagga as well.

For one graduate, Carl Riseley, captain of his course and a former *Australian Idol* contestant, yesterday represented the fulfillment of a life-long dream.

"Like most pilots, I've always had a love of flying," he said.

"It started as a kid."

With his family based in New Zealand when he was a child, Mr Riseley racked up plenty of frequent flyer miles crossing the Tasman – and plenty of hours in the cockpit idolising pilots.

But for fellow graduate pilot Emma Cordell, a former physiotherapist, falling in love with flying came about from a chance encounter – when she got taken on an aerobatics flight on a Tiger Moth to celebrate her birthday one year.

"It's got to be the best gift I ever got," she said.

"First thing I said after landing was, 'I've got to do this'."

Ms Cordell hopes to one day progress to become a check and training captain with Rex, aspiring to pass on what she's learned from her experiences to the next generation of airline pilots.



**BIG STEP:** Graduating Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA) pilots Carl Riseley and Emma Cordell are ready for their next big adventure. Pictures: Alastair Brook



**READY TO SOAR:** Graduating pilots from the Rex 011 Course at yesterday's ceremony.



**BIG MOMENT:** AAPA graduate Alexander Preddey has his Pilot's Wings pinned on by his father Mark.



**ADDRESS:** Wagga mayor Rod Kendall was the guest speaker at yesterday's AAPA graduation ceremony.



**MOMENTOUS OCCASION:** AAPA graduate William Farley with Hilary McKellar at yesterday's ceremony.

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