



SURPRISE FUNDING: Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development Anthony Albanese announces \$1.05 million for the installation of a new instrument landing system at Wagga airport, which enables planes to land in restricted visibility. Picture: Oscar Colman

\$1.05m funding for new landing system

By **PATRICK WOOD**

THE federal government yesterday announced a \$1.05 million funding boost for the installation of an instrument landing system (ILS) at Wagga airport.

ILSs are currently only found in capital city airports such as Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra and are designed to facilitate safer landing for aircrafts in poor weather.

Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development Anthony Albanese was visibly pleased to announce the funding at yesterday's official opening of the Wagga aviation and education hub, which was attended by various members of parliament and aviation industry officials.

Mr Albanese said the systems are essential for training cadet pilots and was treated to some bemused laughter when he said ILSs mean we aren't as dictated to by weather, "which isn't always as reliable as

the Rudd government".

Council, alongside Regional Express Airlines (Rex) and Airservices Australia have been pushing for the safety system to be introduced for some time, and were preparing to split the \$1.63 million project three ways. Following the government announcement, the three groups will now share the \$580,000 needed to bring the plans to fruition.

Wagga mayor Kerry Pascoe said he was excited by the announcement which will save council an estimated \$350,000 that will go back into the airport fund for future developments.

Rex executive chairman Lim Kim Hai also said he was excited by the proposal.

"It's a very rare co-operation between the local authorities, the airline, the Airservices and the federal government," he said.

The installation of the ILS will create 15 short-term jobs, but will also provide the

missing link for cadet pilots who will train at the newly built aviation training academy at the airport.

Cadet pilots are only allowed to land in airports with an ILS and only in clear weather - meaning they have previously had to fly to Canberra. Now, they can complete their training on-site at Wagga airport which has more consistently clear skies.

Rex deputy chairman John Sharp said it rounded off the training program at the training academy.

"It means we have the complete suite of assets available to train the pilots adequately.

It also means Airservices Australia can train air traffic controllers at Wagga. The move is part of a wider plan to make Wagga an aviation education leader in the Asia Pacific outlined in the federal government's aviation white paper, released last December.