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Rex manager lends a hand shifting plane

LIFT OFF: Regional Express general manager of network strategy Warrwick Lodge helps engineers lift a Saab aircraft over the Wagga airport fence yesterday. The plane will become a classroom at the new Australian Airline Pilot Academy. Picture: Addison Hamilton



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TAKE-OFF: A crane was yesterday used to lift a de-commissioned Regional Express plane over the fence and into Wagga Airport's grounds. The plane will be turned into a classroom for the Australian Airline Pilot Academy. Picture: Addison Hamilton

Crane places plane firmly on the plain

By **BEN HIGGINS**

A PLANE took flight yesterday under the controls of a crane driver, not a pilot.

Regional Express engineers together with Riverina Cranes staff helped lift the six-tonne Saab 340 over the airport fence and into its new home at the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA).

The plane was decommissioned several years ago and will now become a classroom at the academy, which itself opens next Thursday.

As a training tool the plane will be used for pilots to learn in-flight announcements while flight attendant



Using a real plane makes a big difference to sitting in a classroom.

Rex general manager of network strategy Warrick Lodge

students can practise emergency evacuation procedures.

Rex general manager of network strategy, Warrick Lodge, said it was an exciting time at the Wagga base. "Actually, using a real plane makes a big difference to sitting in a classroom," he said.

"It will be a static display after we perform some cosmetic improvements to make it look as real as possible but it

will also be powered so that the students can use it.

"Today was a joint operation with Saab to lift the plane properly and not be left with a two-piece display."

The Rex-owned and operated AAPA officially opens on Thursday, May 27, to be inaugurated by federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese and member for Riverina Kay Hull.