

Graduate pilots ready to stretch their wings

► WAGGA

By Jade Martin

WHILE most teenagers relish the freedom of having their driver's licence, Casey Howard has gone one better and received his wings.

The 19-year-old former Wagga High School student was one of 19 cadet pilots who graduated from the Regional Express Australian Pilot Academy yesterday after eight months of full-time training.

Though chief flying instructor Geoff Cook shared a laugh as he dubbed the cadets the "future of aviation", the day was especially significant for Mr Howard, who is now one step closer to following in the footsteps of his father Michael – a Regional Express flight captain. While it will be at least a year before Mr Howard is landing a commercial flight, he said he was glad he has had the opportunity to turn his hobby as a recreational pilot into a career in the aviation industry.

"If you don't have a cadetship it is hard to break in to," he said.

Reflecting on the rigorous study undertaken by the cadets, Mr Cook said the selective course covered everything from the theory and practice of aviation, through to how the cadets conduct and



READY FOR TAKE OFF: Regional Express cadets (from left) Mathew Consalvi, 21, Casey Howard, 19, Megan Flicke, 21, and Kristen Bennett, 21, celebrate their graduation from the Australian Airline Pilot Academy. Picture: Oscar Colman

present themselves.

"One of the things we try and show is for the guys to be professional in everything they do," he said.

Member for Farrer

Sussan Ley, who obtained her commercial pilot's licence when she was 20, joined the graduates and their close friends and family at the ceremony.

Reflecting on the number

of aviation services across NSW that have closed and the four flying schools in Canberra that have ceased operating, she congratulated the graduates and encouraged them to

test the limits of their being as they began their careers.

"Through aviation you can grow as a person, and I know you will do that," she said.