

Pilots land in Ballarat

By Danielle Perkins

THE first group of student pilots to land in Ballarat will soon return to the skies to start learning.

Fourteen graduate students were yesterday officially welcomed to Australia, with city officials hosting a civic reception in their honour.

The young men will attend a new multi-million dollar pilot academy being established at Ballarat airport before returning to China to work for ShenZhen Airlines in Guangdong Province.

The Singapore Technologies Aviation Training Academy will train hundreds of pilots of Asian and Indian airlines. It was seen as a coup for Ballarat when the city was selected to house the school last year.

City of Ballarat chief executive officer Anthony Schinck yesterday described the academy and the arrival of the pilots as extremely exciting.

“This is a very significant investment in our community, which is projected to lead to an overall economic benefit to Ballarat of over \$7 million per annum,” he

said.

“What we know is market studies have highlighted that globally, to keep up with aircraft deliveries, around 17,000 new pilots are required every year to fill airline cockpits.

“That’s an incredible demand and something we have recognised together with our partners and our new friends at STATA to bring this particular project to realisation.”

Mr Schinck said Ballarat was an ideal location for the academy.

“It offers fantastic infrastructure for a flight training academy and certainly the city council has been very supportive of the investment,” he said.

Mayor Stephen Jones also welcomed the pilots, saying the day should be a proud moment for them all.

“And we’re very proud to have you here as the first group to start their training in Australia, but, more importantly, in Ballarat,” he said.

“You’ve travelled a long way from your family and friends in China, but no doubt you will find Ballarat and Australia welcoming

and a friendly place.”

Cr Jones even hinted he hoped one day to be a passenger in a jet flown by one of the pilots.

“Who knows, maybe one day on my . . . well, I can’t say junkets as a councillor, but when we travel the world, you may be the pilot on that particular plane in years to come.

“And what a fantastic feeling that must be.”

The 14 trainee pilots all have degrees from universities in China and have been working as cadets for their future employer.

They are currently enjoying a two-week orientation period, including tours of Ballarat, before starting ground training.

The students will take to the skies in May and will stay in Ballarat for 12 months.

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