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New simulator already fully booked

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SYDNEY, May 8: Boosting its investment in pilot training, Virgin Blue Airlines Group today commissioned a \$10 million Embraer aircraft simulator at Brisbane Airport.

The electric motion simulator is the only one of its type in Australia. The new advanced simulators are more economical to run than hydraulic simulators, using up to 70% less power.

The simulator is an exact replica of Virgin Blue's first E190 jet and was made at the same time as the actual aircraft. The training course has been developed by Swiss Aviation Training in conjunction with Virgin Blue, and has been certified to world's best practises by the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

Virgin Blue has just introduced the Brazilian executive-style jet to its fleet, with five across its domestic network. Thirteen more are to come by the end of this year.

The E-Jet has allowed Virgin Blue to introduce jet services to the Sydney-Canberra market as well as to new regional destinations like Albury and Port Macquarie. The initial group of Virgin Blue Embraer pilots travelled to Zurich for training and simulator sessions, but now all simulator training will be in Brisbane.

Virgin Blue chief executive Brett Godfrey says the simulator is already fully booked for pilot endorsement training, command upgrade training, recurrent training and engineering training 21 hours a day, seven days a week for the next two years.

In the long term, the unit will also be available for pilots from other companies.

The E-Jet simulator sits alongside Virgin Blue's Boeing 737 simulator. Swiss Aviation Training vice-president of training Captain Laurent Privet says Brisbane has one of the best E-Jet training centres in the world. The simulator has been christened "Simhorita" in honour of its Brazilian heritage.