

As youngest female helicopter pilot ...



Bridgette Kies with her father Peter Kies of Barossa Helicopters.

Bridgette's head in the clouds

By LAUREN AHWAN

Bridgette Kies is one 18-year-old with her head in the clouds.

Bridgette, from Lyndoch, flew into the history books late last year as Australia's youngest female helicopter pilot.

"It sort of hasn't really sunk in yet," Bridgette said. "I was pretty spun out by it all — it was pretty amazing.

"All the guys were paying me out about doing the course ... but I just thought I wanna do it so I'm gonna do it.

"Of course when I passed I had to buy everyone a round of beer. Everything costs you a couple of cartons of beer when you do the course."

With her parents, Peter and Sandra, operating the Barossa Helicopter Service, Bridgette's love of flying began from a young age. But it was not until she left school that Bridgette thought to turn her way of life into a career.

"Most people go out and have jobs working in a deli or some-

thing, but I just thought I'd do something different," Bridgette said. "And I love being up there in control."

After a year in Queensland under the watchful eye of ex-army helicopter pilot Tub Matheson, Bridgette clocked up 104 hours of flying time to attain her commercial helicopter licence.

"Flying is a lot of fun, especially the first time you go solo — it's like wow, I'm really flying," Bridgette said.

"I want to go on and fly with Rescue One, but I'll stay home and work at home for a while — depending on what mum and dad say I can do."

Like any proud parent, Sandra was overcome by Bridgette's success.

"Aviation is a pretty big business. It's a man's world and for an 18-year-old it's a pretty big thing," Sandra said.

"People her age should be out partying, but Bridgette's been able to settle down and do this ... I'm just bursting. It's like wow — there's not a lot you can say, it's just fantastic."