



LEARNING: First year apprentices Kane Jennings, left, and Kurt Pinckham at WesTrac's new Tomago headquarters yesterday. *Picture: Dean Osland*

By NEIL GOFFET

RECOGNISING the Hunter's skills shortage was part of the reason mining equipment specialist WesTrac built a training institute into its massive \$160 million headquarters at Tomago.

The training centre would accommodate all 350 NSW

## On track to deliver new apprentices

apprentices when courses were held and chief operating officer of WesTrac NSW Darren Tasker said 250 of those would come from the Hunter.

WesTrac is Australia's leading supplier of Caterpillar

mining and service machinery and needs another 150 employees before the site is fully operational in September.

The 51,000 square-metre site is one of the largest industrial hubs in the Hunter and will

open with about 400 employees.

Mr Tasker said the Tomago plant could employ about 1100 at capacity but that would not be achieved for at least another three years.

"We desperately need more

skilled workers especially auto electricians and diesel mechanics," Mr Tasker said.

"We have recognised the skills shortage in the Hunter and we are doing our best to address the problem by providing our own while working in with Hunter TAFE and the Hunter Valley Training Company."