

Getting ahead of the trades game



JUSTIN Constable and Graham Grant from New England North West Group Training and Shenhua Communications Manager, Melanie Layton, with Gunnedah High School school-based trainees Kih McDonald, Keith Magann, Mark Dukes and Damien Beasley.

SIX students from Gunnedah and two from Quirindi have been selected from among more than 30 applicants to be part of Shenhua Watermark's first school-based traineeship program announced in May this year.

Year 10 students Kih McDonald, Keith Magann, Mark Dukes and Damien Beasley from Gunnedah High School and Isaac Lowe and Ben Laurie from St Mary's will each get a head start on their trades qualifications, while also completing their Higher School Certificates.

Shenhua Communications Manager, Melanie Layton, said the quality and number of applications had been outstanding.

"This school-based apprentice-

ship program is the first step in Shenhua's long-term employment and training strategy," Ms Layton said.

"We are really excited about these students who are our first lot of school based trainees.

Gunnedah High School participants and their parents attended a sign-up day at the school on Tuesday, where they were introduced to a team of people who will help them through the workload over the next two years.

Susi Bell from the Department of Education and Communities, Nicole Flemming from TAFE, Kel Walls from Gunnedah High School, Marise Holloway from State Training Services, Justin Constable and Graham Grant from New England North West Group Training and Ms Layton

will all take a keen interest in their progress and provide advice along the way.

Mr Constable will be behind the students every step of the way.

"It is our role to provide support in every way we can, to ensure the students are coping well and there are no small difficulties that snowball," Mr Constable said.

The students will work one day a week with individual employers. Shenhua fully funds the scheme and the businesses train the students and get the benefits of an extra set of enthusiastic hands.

"And at the end of it all, the students will have completed one full year of their apprenticeship, while they also get credit toward their HSC. "And they even get paid!"