

# Reserve's true patriots



**Mechanical know-how:** Pte Dean Taylor and Pte Luke Gibbons, apprentices under the PATRIOT program, get some advice from WO2 Jim Grindrod – no doubt correct dress was an issue that came up in discussion.

By Fig-Off Julia Ravell

THE Army Reserve and Mack Trucks Australia have joined forces in an innovative training program for apprentice mechanics.

The PATRIOT program (Partner Army To Recruit Individuals Over Time) is a 7 Bde recruiting initiative that will supply Reserve units in Queensland with up to 15 jointly trained apprentice mechanics in 2008-09.

Mack's Brisbane Workshop Manager, Alan Wilkins, said the program, in which six aspiring mechanics were already developing skills, was discussed enthusiastically at the company's recent national conference and that an Australia-wide roll-out was expected next year.

The four-year dual apprenticeship program offers apprentices an opportunity to develop and diversify their heavy commercial skills by alternating between Mack's Brisbane dealership and 7CSSB.

In addition to working on trucks, the apprentices will hone their skills for half the year on ASLAVs, Land Rovers and Unimogs.

"This initiative offers young mechanics the chance to diversify their skills and gain experience in two very valuable work areas.

Introducing the program allows us to help build on the issue of skills shortage and support the industry that ultimately supports us," Mr Wilkins said.

"After the gloss of getting an apprenticeship wears off, work becomes mundane.

"The Army work provides variety that keeps them interested and encourages them to keep fit with team sports."

Deputy Commander 7 Bde Col Chris Hamilton said the program had the potential to meet technical trade shortages in the ADF.

"The Mack project will deliver between five and 12 qualified heavy vehicle mechanics a year into 7 Bde. A national roll-out will see equivalent numbers delivered to Army Reserve formations or logistics units in each state," Col Hamilton said.

"Engagement with other Defence industries and expansion of the scheme has significant potential to meet both full-time and part-time critical trade deficiencies across the three Services."

He said trainees remained employees of Mack Trucks Australia during their four-year indenture period and the tenure was conditional on them also remaining an effective ARes member.