

# Course welds new career for Jamie



**HANDS ON:** Jamie Mears is working on a hydro-electric project which will bring electricity to a village in Solomon Islands.

By **UTE SCHULENBERG**

**JAMIE** Mears loves welding.

But it's a talent he only discovered thanks to a TAFE/ Dorrigo Youth Service course last year, which put the tools in his hands out at Pelena Energy's workshop.

Managing director Peter Lynch was so impressed with Jamie's skill level and attitude that he offered him a traineeship.

Now Jamie is Peter's offsider as they work on the construction of a hydro-electric turbine bound for the Solomon Islands village of Masupa'a.

"I'm enjoying learning all the new skills," Jamie said.

"And it's great to have work doing something I'm good at."

Mr Lynch said it was not only the young man's talents for welding that drew his attention, but also the swag

of skills gained from growing up on a farm in Dorrigo.

"Jamie has a practical understanding of various engineering concepts and technologies. These are directly transferable to our needs, which are linking rural Australia with the rural South Pacific," Mr Lynch said.

As Jamie works on the turbine on the plateau, villagers in Masupa'a are busy digging trenches for pipes, which will carry water from a small weir down the hillside to the turbine. The high speed water will spin the turbine which is connected to the generator to produce electricity for the 1000 inhabitants. Pelena Energy is currently in negotiation with Solomon Islands' government for a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the development of 500 village electrification projects coupled with sustainable income generation projects.