

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Training and Skills

Minister for Higher Education



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GOTAFE SPEARHEADS STUDENT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A Victorian TAFE and its students have designed and implemented a new strategy to make people of different backgrounds and identities feel safe and included across its campuses.

The GOTAFE Social Justice Charter was officially launched in Shepparton after several months' consultation with about 540 students and staff, led by a group of 18 students and alumni known as Social Justice Champions.

The document aims to embed the five key principles of Respect, Equity, Participation, Diversity and Empowerment into all aspects of GOTAFE's operations, systems and infrastructure for students and staff.

That includes the creation of prayer rooms, multilingual interactive displays on campus, and LGBTQI+, autism and mental health training for staff.

GOTAFE has more than 9400 students across nine campuses. Almost 75 languages are spoken across its student body and around 11 per cent of students and 4 per cent of staff identify as having a disability.

The new Social Justice Charter builds on GOTAFE's dedication as a leader in inclusive education for which it was named the Inclusive Training Provider of the Year at the 2020 Victorian Training Awards.

The Andrews Labor Government supports diversity and inclusion in the training and skills system including by funding the \$1.6 billion Disability Inclusion initiative to help people reach their full potential and the \$4.2 million Koorie Student Support Officer (KSSO) program to ensure every Victorian TAFE has access to specialist staff.

The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* includes an unprecedented overall annual investment of \$1 billion to strengthen the training and skills system as it emerges from the coronavirus pandemic.

Quote attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

"We're committed to giving every Victorian access to a quality education and making them feel safe while they study – which is at the heart of GOTAFE's new Social Justice Charter."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

"GOTAFE is a leader in inclusion and this initiative will foster diversity in the local community and ensure a rich pipeline of skilled workers for the state."

Quote attributable to GOTAFE CEO Travis Heeney

"GOTAFE strives to be more than an education facility - we aim to create a sense of belonging for our community so that everyone, regardless of their identity or background, feels safe and included."

Quote attributable to GOTAFE Social Justice Champion Liaqat Ahmadi

"Being involved in the creation of the Charter makes me realise how students, staff and even the Board are really passionate about making the best GOTAFE – and it's something I've loved helping with."

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