

# 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



Thursday, 17 February 2022

## HELPING MORE ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES INTO LOCAL JOBS

The Andrews Labor Government has expanded its unique program for asylum seekers and refugees, allowing even more new arrivals to access free and subsidised skills and training to help them build happy and healthy lives in Victoria.

Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney today announced the expanded eligibility criteria for the *Asylum Seeker VET* and *Reconnect* programs, allowing Temporary Humanitarian Stay (449) visa holders to access Free TAFE, subsidised training and other support services.

The new program means people who have been forced to flee their home due to war, victims of human trafficking, forced marriage and slavery-like offences, and those from other circumstances can find a meaningful career in industries like hospitality, health and aged care, education and more.

There are about 1,821 people on Temporary Humanitarian Stay (449) visas in Victoria, including recent arrivals from Afghanistan.

Training is key to the settling process, in addition to settling services provided by AMES Australia, including quarantine assistance, housing, healthcare and more.

The *Asylum Seeker VET* program has helped nearly 5,400 people into training at TAFEs, Registered Training Organisations and Learn Local in *Skills First* courses and other supported training.

The *Reconnect* program helps about 1,700 people each year by providing wrap-around supports including foundation skills, employment assistance and career counselling.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* invested \$88.8 million to provide subsidised VET access to an extra 12,200 eligible students, including \$6 million to expand training opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.

The Labor Government also implemented a new three-year funding arrangement with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to continue its support for new arrivals, including a visa and study help desk for new arrivals, a dedicated website with resources for students on campus, staff professional development and more.

Since 2014, the Government has made a record \$3.2 billion investment to rebuild TAFE and support universities and higher education to ensure Victorians have access to high quality education and rewarding career pathways.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

*“Education changes lives and that’s why we’re making sure more asylum seekers and refugees have the chance to rebuild their lives in Victoria through Free TAFE and training, resettlement programs and wrap-around supports.”*

*“We’ve already successfully helped thousands of asylum seekers and refugees into training and job pathways – and we’ll continue doing what we can to help new arrivals feel welcome and happy in their new home.”*