

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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NEW TAFE COURSES BOOST AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH WEST VICTORIA

Courses in agriculture and horticulture will be offered for the first time at South West TAFE in Colac, thanks to an Andrews Labor Government investment to provide world-class training equipment at the campus.

Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney today announced the new courses and an investment of more than \$1 million for new equipment at South West TAFE during a visit to 'Craiglands' farm in the Colac district.

More than \$264,000 will be used on vital equipment for TAFE students, including two quad bikes, a side-by-side utility vehicle, a new tractor and security system and help upgrade the horticulture workshops and polycarbonate greenhouse sheeting.

As a result of the new equipment and upgrades, South West TAFE will be able to offer Cert II in Horticulture in Colac for the first time as well as fully delivering Cert III and IV in Agriculture and related short courses at the campus.

The new courses will meet the growing popularity and interest in agriculture and horticulture courses, which have seen an enrolment increase of 56 per cent from 2020 to 2021. It will also create a pipeline of skilled workers to meet demand in the local primary production industry, which is the third largest sector in Colac Otway Shire.

A further investment of more than \$785,000 will be used to buy a range of civil construction plant and machinery for students of the Cert II and III Civil Construction courses and other programs at South West TAFE's Sherwood Park campus.

The investment is part of a \$2 million package for the Western District under the Labor Government's \$12 million TAFE Equipment and Facilities Fund, announced in the *Victorian Budget 2020/21* and overseen by Apprenticeships Victoria.

Since 2014, the Labor 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 careers.

Quote attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

"Our investment in South West TAFE will boost the number of opportunities for local students as well as provide them with the vital, world-class tools they need to be job-ready."

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"We know how important the agriculture and horticulture sectors are to Victoria, which is why we're securing a local pipeline of skilled workers through our world-class TAFE and training system."

Quote attributable to South West TAFE CEO Mark Fidge

"Agriculture and horticulture courses are becoming increasingly popular – and we're excited to play such a significant role in fostering the next generation of workers to support the local industry and communities."