

# Media Release

**Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Minister for Regional Development  
Minister for Agriculture



Thursday, 14 April 2022

## NEW TRAINING TO BOOST HORTICULTURE WORKFORCE

A ground-breaking training program will support more long-term careers in Victoria's horticulture sector while delivering a resilient workforce to support Victorian farmers and regional economies, backed by support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas today launched the new horticulture pilot program at Plunkett Orchards in Mooroopna, Goulburn Valley. The pilot program will link workers with expert training and on-the-job experience to build their skills and open new career pathways.

The pilot program, backed by \$600,000 funding from the Labor Government will be rolled out across critical horticulture regions including the Sunraysia, the Goulburn Valley and Gippsland. It will also provide businesses with more workers to help build a sustainable and resilient seasonal workforce.

Plunkett Orchards is creating a world-class, modern workplace with high tech picking platforms allowing workers to do their job without needing to climb ladders or carry heavy fruit bags.

The technology increases orchard efficiency and safety and has been a valuable for orchard managers to attract and retain workers in a competitive labour market.

The horticulture traineeships program is part of the Government's \$84 million investment in agriculture as it recovers from the pandemic and supports a skilled and resilient agriculture workforce for the future.

The new traineeships will be run by Apprenticeship Employment Network in collaboration with group training organisations, TAFEs, horticulture businesses, local industry groups and Agriculture Victoria.

The collaborative program will build pathways to high-level skills and knowledge in areas such as operating machinery and farm infrastructure as well as supply chains, relationship management and digital platforms, all critical skills needed for the future of Victoria's world-class horticulture industry.

The Government is working closely with the industry to remove barriers that have traditionally prevented workers from taking up horticulture roles, with a focus on improving accommodation, transport, training and support services.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas**

*"This is an exciting new program, providing horticulture businesses with the skilled, reliable workforce they need now and in the future. We are gearing up our next generation of workers with the training and skills they need."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Skills and Training Gayle Tierney**

*"This program gives workers the support to undertake job-focussed training and delivers the formal qualifications that we know open doors to new, rewarding careers for people in agriculture."*

### **Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp**

*"This innovative program brings students, employers and training providers together to deliver a course that provides business with the workers they need and workers with the future they want."*

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