

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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FOLLOWING THE FLOWERS TO FIRST NATIONS-LED AGRICULTURE

The Andrews Labor Government is investing in a pilot program to support Aboriginal Victorian farmers – boosting First Nations-led regenerative farming practices and realising business opportunities in the production of native products across Victoria.

The Labor Government has invested \$980,000 in the Outback Academy Australia's 'Follow the Flowers' initiative, helping address the demand for skilled Aboriginal agricultural workers.

The investment will support tailored, culturally appropriate training that meets the learning needs of up to 30 agricultural workers at Victorian farms, including Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative in Shepparton and Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative in Warrnambool.

The students will be supported by Workforce Development Managers who will help connect them with training providers, industry experts and further opportunities. A team at the Melbourne Innovation Centre will also provide support to the participating farms to establish them in local and national supply chains.

The pilot will inform the creation of up to 20 short courses and support for further training and employment pathways – with information provided to other First Nations farms in Victoria and across the nation.

The Labor Government investment will also support 'Follow the Flowers' in its work in improving soil and water quality and biodiversity – and support business ventures in the production of honey, food, botanicals and Australian Native Wildflowers as well as farm-based tourism opportunities.

A further pilot will be established with an influential farmer who can help build relationships with the broader regenerative farming sector.

The Labor Government is committed to self-determination and supporting Traditional Owners to reclaim their traditional agricultural practices with more than \$3 million invested in the development of a Native Food and Botanicals Strategy and the Djakitjuk Djanga program to advance the industry's development.

Since 2014, the Government has made a record \$3.5 billion investment to rebuild TAFE and support universities and higher education to ensure Victorians have access to high quality education and rewarding career pathways.

Quote attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

"This is an incredibly special project that puts First Nations people at the centre of contemporary farming practices – giving them the skills they need to strengthen Victoria's booming agricultural industry."

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"First Nations people have looked after this land for tens of thousands of years and as we mark National Reconciliation Week it is fitting that we are helping continue this proud and ancient tradition."

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"We're working alongside Traditional Owners to ensure they have their rightful place in our nation-leading agriculture industry, with all the economic benefits it brings."

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