

# Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP  
Minister for Skills and TAFE  
Minister for Regional Development



Thursday, 26 October 2023

## AUSLAN COURSES ADDED TO FREE TAFE FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE VICTORIA

Hundreds of Victorians are learning valuable Auslan skills in preparation for careers working with deaf and hard-of-hearing people – without tuition fees – as part of the Allan Labor Government’s Free TAFE program.

Minister for Skills and TAFE Gayle Tierney today met with students learning Auslan at Melbourne Polytechnic in Preston, where Auslan has been taught for almost 10 years.

The Diploma of Auslan, Diploma of Interpreting (Auslan) and Advanced Diploma of Interpreting (Auslan) were added to Victoria’s Free TAFE course list this year, joining more than 80 courses in priority areas.

Phoebe May is studying towards a Diploma of Auslan at Melbourne Polytechnic to support her career in the arts. One day at work she was guiding a deaf person through an exhibition and could only communicate through notes on paper. She decided to learn Auslan so she could communicate with deaf and hard of hearing people and help them experience the wonder of the arts.

On her first day of study Phoebe discovered that her Auslan teacher was the same person she’d guided through the exhibition, and who inspired her to enrol.

Employment opportunities requiring Auslan skills are increasing and people with interpreting skills are needed across a range of industries, from the disability sector to entertainment. Auslan interpreters play an important role in helping people with hearing loss access vital information and services such as news, medical services and education.

The Labor Government is making sure every Victorian has access to the training they need for the job they want. It is investing \$186 million to extend the eligibility of Free TAFE through the *Victorian Budget 23/24*.

Every Victorian is eligible for government-funded training no matter their existing qualifications and there is no longer a one-course limit on Free TAFE participation within the one priority pathway.

Free TAFE has removed the barriers to starting a new career for more than 153,000 students – saving students almost \$394 million since the program started in 2019.

To find out more visit: [vic.gov.au/free-tafe](https://vic.gov.au/free-tafe).

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

*“Auslan interpreters play a vital role in an inclusive and equitable society – whether helping people with hearing loss to access information or helping them to enjoy a Taylor Swift concert, it’s important and rewarding work.”*

*“We’ve added Auslan courses to Free TAFE to not only help Victorians find a pathway towards a fulfilling career, but to deliver the skills needed for an inclusive society where all Victorians are able to thrive.”*

### Quote attributable to Member for Preston and Reservoir Nathan Lambert

*“As employment opportunities requiring Auslan grow, it’s important that everyone who wants to build those skills has the opportunity to.”*

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**Quote attributable to Auslan student Phoebe May**

*“Learning these skills wouldn’t have been possible without Free TAFE. When I was inspired to study Auslan, I started to investigate courses – when I saw it was a Free TAFE course, I knew I could do it and signed up right away.”*