

Media Release

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



Wednesday, 16 October 2024

SAFER AND FAIRER APPRENTICESHIPS

The Allan Labor Government is backing workers, making apprenticeships safer and fairer across the state.

Minister for Skills and TAFE Gayle Tierney and Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas today announced the Labor Government is accepting all recommendations of the Apprenticeship Taskforce report – in full or in-principle – and launched a \$9 million package to improve safety and mental health support for apprentices and trainees.

The reforms will provide more support for apprentices and their employers and address the key issues highlighted in the report, including safety, harassment, training quality, and fairness at work.

Among the first reforms to be implemented will be a pilot of a central helpdesk service, where apprentices and trainees can go for all types of workplace support. This helpdesk will be run by Apprenticeships Victoria and builds on the success of the Apprenticeship Support Program.

The Government has also given in-principal support to the establishment of a dedicated regulator for apprentices and trainees. The dedicated regulator will work to improve outcomes for Victoria's 77,000 apprentices and make the system easier to navigate, helping them stay in their chosen fields.

The package of reforms will include more support for employers of apprentices, greater inclusion and safety for women apprentices, modernising laws that govern the apprenticeship system, and better collaboration between agencies and the Commonwealth.

To further support our apprentices, the Labor Government has today announced three new mental health programs that will be available to them, including the Apprentice Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP offers free counselling and can be accessed online or by phone without the need for a referral.

Victoria's Apprenticeship Taskforce was established through the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* and is chaired by Sharan Burrow AC, alongside representatives from unions, industry, and apprentices.

Apprenticeships Victoria, established in 2021, will oversee the new helpdesk and all mental health initiatives to make sure apprentices and trainees, across all industries, are getting the support they need to do well on the job.

To read the Apprenticeships Taskforce's Report and the Government's response, visit: apprenticeships.vic.gov.au/apprenticeships-taskforce/.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Skills and TAFE Gayle Tierney

"We're backing all the recommendations made by the Apprenticeship Taskforce with this \$9 million package which will deliver the fair, safe workplace every apprentice deserves."

"We thank the Apprenticeships Taskforce, Sharan Burrow AC and the unions and employers who took part, for their recommendations on how we can continue to make apprenticeships in Victoria safe and fair."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas

"Apprentices and trainees are crucial to building for Victoria's future – we're supporting them with the healthy and respectful workplaces to make sure they can stay on the job."

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Quotes attributable to Apprenticeships Taskforce Chair Sharan Burrow AC

“Apprenticeships and traineeships are the backbone of the skilled workforce our economy so desperately needs. Supporting young people and adults retraining to get the qualifications they want has to be a priority with workplace education to ensure inclusive environments backed by regulatory oversight.”