

MEDIA RELEASE – FEBRUARY 18, 2022

**Expanded access to skills and training will support cohesive communities:  
Jesuit Social Services**

The Victorian Government’s expansion of a program that provides free and subsidised skills and training services to refugees and people seeking asylum will ensure more people can make a positive contribution to the community and reach their potential, says Jesuit Social Services.

“Access to skills and training, and in turn employment, are critical for all people in order that they flourish – we can’t expect people to lead fulfilling and positive lives if they don’t have the support they need to learn, improve their skills and ultimately secure employment to support themselves and their families,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Of course this is also true for people who have faced significant adversity to arrive in Australia, such as refugees and people seeking asylum, who deserve every opportunity to lead safe and productive lives.”

Under the expanded eligibility criteria for the Asylum Seeker VET and Reconnect programs, Temporary Humanitarian Stay (449) visa holders will be able to access free TAFE, subsidised training and other support services.

“There are currently more than 1,800 people on Temporary Humanitarian Stay (449) visas in Victoria, including people who have recently fled Afghanistan in light of the current crisis unfolding there. That is more than 1,800 people who now have access to new opportunities and pathways to help them to learn new skills, make new social and professional connections and find and maintain employment in industries like hospitality, health, aged care and education,” says Ms Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services runs a range of education, training and employment services for people who face barriers to mainstream education and employment services, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as early school leavers, long-term unemployed people and people who have had contact with the criminal justice system.

Our services include Jesuit Community College, a Registered Training Organisation which provides accredited and pre-accredited training, and we partner with organisations like NAB, Victoria Police and Melbourne Water to support people from diverse backgrounds into the local workforce.

“Every day we see the positive impact that education and training have on the confidence and wellbeing of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. We also see how this success benefits the person’s peers, families and broader communities.

“We would be very pleased to see other states and territories follow Victoria’s lead and ensure that more people from diverse backgrounds, including refugees and people seeking asylum, have access to the skills and training services they need to lead safe, positive and productive lives in Australia.”

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