



gotafe

Social Justice Charter

— 2020 —



**Respect
Equity
Participation
Diversity
Empowerment**



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Acknowledgement of Country


We acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the traditional custodians of the land which GOTAFE operates; the Taungurung People of the Kulin Nation, Boon Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation, Wurundjeri of the Kulin Nation and the Yorta Yorta People. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

'GOTAFE strives for inclusion by design, not by accident'

GOTAFE Board member and Gender and Sexuality Commissioner, **Ro Allen**



Foreword




I am very proud to release the first GOTAFE Social Justice Charter. GOTAFE operates across an incredibly rich and diverse footprint which brings significant opportunities for collaboration and growth as a community. The Social Justice Charter is about creating equal opportunities, addressing systemic barriers and actively celebrating diversity. GOTAFE is committed to embedding the Social Justice Charter across all areas of the organisation to ensure that we operate through an equity lens.

The Social Justice Charter is the result of several months of consultation with over 500 students and staff. This consultation was led by 18 Social Justice Champions including current and past students. It focused on how GOTAFE can ensure it is welcoming, equitable and inclusive for everyone.

The principles and actions throughout this document have been informed by a broad range of voices from across our incredibly vibrant and diverse communities. The Charter is built around five overarching principles:

Respect • Equity • Participation • Diversity • Empowerment



GOTAFE envisions that the commitments included under these principles will have far reaching impacts for staff, students and the wider community across multiple levels.

In developing this Charter we acknowledge that some individuals and communities face additional barriers to accessing educational opportunities. GOTAFE have outlined a range of commitments derived from our consultation to address specific barriers for the following priority groups: Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people, people living with a disability, LGBTIQ+ people, multicultural communities and young people.

GOTAFE will be accountable to our staff, students and the community on how we are tracking in terms of delivering on our commitments outlined in this Charter. I encourage you all to take an active role in promoting this Charter and to raise your voice if you feel there are further opportunities for GOTAFE to strengthen our commitment to social justice.

GOTAFE strives to be more than an education facility, we want to be a place where people from all backgrounds feel safe and included. We aim to create a sense of belonging. A place where you can see yourself in the staff, in the posters around our buildings and in the curriculum.

I am extremely proud for GOTAFE to be leading the way in providing inclusive and welcoming environments for everyone.

Travis Heeney
GOTAFE CEO



Purpose

The purpose of the GOTAFE Social Justice Charter is to embed the universal principles of equity, fairness, and respect into all aspects of GOTAFE's operations, systems, and infrastructure.

The GOTAFE Social Justice Charter is an important step to identify principles and actions to create equal opportunities for all students, staff, teachers, trainers and communities that have a relationship with GOTAFE.

Creating the Social Justice Charter

This Charter was developed in consultation with GOTAFE staff, students and the broader community. GOTAFE recognises that policies are live documents that need to be informed by the people they set out to benefit.

In developing this Social Justice Charter, there was a program of community engagement and research that included:



background research on existing social justice policies and literature to understanding leading approaches and inform the engagement



engaging **19 Social Justice Champions** (GOTAFE students) who were trained and remunerated to undertake engagement with their peers



six focus groups across four campuses to hear from underrepresented voices.

Approximately 540 people contributed to the principles that underpin the Charter and suggested key actions.



Social Justice Champions

In developing the GOTAFE Social Justice Charter, GOTAFE recognised that the process itself provided an opportunity to demonstrate the principles of social justice by employing and training 19 GOTAFE students as 'Social Justice Champions'. They were responsible for designing, delivering and promoting their own engagement events across GOTAFE campuses and supporting the design of the launch event. This process sought to enrich the Charter by reaching a diverse representation of the student population, resulting in genuine ownership of the content by them; as well as by providing the 'Social Justice Champions' with opportunities to develop their skills and to become leaders at GOTAFE.

These are some of their reflections about their involvement in developing the GOTAFE Social Justice Charter.

What was the best example of Social Justice that you heard about at GOTAFE?

'The best example that I've heard and seen is the signage on the toilets to make them more inclusive and safe for everyone to use.'

'People do respect each other inside the classroom and in the wider community of GOTAFE.'

'The best part was giving students a say in the social justice charter.'

What was the most memorable things about being a Social Justice Champion?

'Just the willingness of the students to engage once you explain the concept of social justice. They got it and they wanted to be heard, they wanted to make the change and wanted to see it stick.'

'There was one student, an older person who was obviously disadvantaged, she became more confident once I sat down and spoke to her. It was like her face changed when someone was willing to listen, was caring and wanted to hear her opinion.'

'Meeting the board...because they actually cared...and there were a few of them that were really invested in it. I don't want to say that surprised me but it was good to see, that they were invested in it.'

'It was really positive to see different students coming together from different campuses and getting to know each other and to do the survey. It really improved my people skills and communication skills.'

'I was surprised about the amount of LGBTI+ (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transsexual, Gender diverse, Intersex and Queer) people here.'

How has being a Social Justice Champion changed you?

'I gained an understanding of what social justice is and how diverse we actually are.'

'I'm coming from a place of wanting to rebuild my confidence and skills. I know that I already had those skills and have used them in the past but for me being a Social Justice Champion has given me more confidence in myself. I already had them (skills) but had to get them out of the cupboard.'

'I got the idea of how people, students, staff and even the Board are really passionate about bringing change to GOTAFE. They give us a strong encouragement to be that change. I think it really changed me.'



'I gained an understanding of what social justice is and how diverse we actually are.'

Social Justice Champion



Future of the Social Justice Champions

To ensure there continues to be a strong student and staff voice in the Social Justice Charter GOTAFE are committed to supporting Social Justice Champions. As a key action for 2020 GOTAFE will work to establish an ongoing role for Social Justice Champions that will have the following characteristics:

- A formal position description
- A strong role in advocacy
- Empower the students and organisation to embrace the Social Justice Charter
- Promoting the Social Justice Charter both internally and externally
- Consist of staff and students
- Participate in the review process





Human rights explained

Human rights are the recognition and respect of people's dignity. They are also the basic standards used to identify and measure equality and fairness.

There is a strong relationship between human rights and social justice. Social justice is the bridge that links people with their human rights. While human rights in Australia are protected under law, people may not always be able to access them due to barriers that create disadvantage. Social justice is what links people experiencing disadvantage to have the confidence, knowledge and community support to exercise their human rights.

Social justice and human rights impact everybody's life. Having access to your human rights means not being disadvantaged or left behind. This could require actions that are physical (such as ensuring classrooms are accessible for all mobility needs, providing gender-neutral bathrooms and quiet spaces to pray or have a break from sensory stimulation), policy-based (having codes of conduct and policies to support human rights) or through public support and communications (using pronouns and celebrating cultural days).

'Respect for human rights is the cornerstone of strong communities in which everyone can make a contribution and feel included.'

Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013



Social justice at GOTAFE

Social justice is fundamental to the delivery of education that meets the needs of all students and their communities. GOTAFE is committed to equity and diversity. As the largest regional TAFE in Victoria, GOTAFE has a role to lead and provide a welcoming, respectful and inclusive environment for all.

The Social Justice Charter is designed to be intersectional. The key actions, principles and commitments are designed to create social justice for everybody at GOTAFE. This includes careful consideration of how equity can be realised for people experiencing disadvantage. It also recognises that access to rights is highly individual and context-specific. Just because a person belongs to a disadvantaged group or population does not mean they will be disadvantaged. Similarly, because a person does not belong to one such group does not mean that they will not be disadvantaged.

At GOTAFE, some people are more likely to experience exclusion or are unable to have their rights realised. These people include members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Diverse, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) community, newly arrived refugees or migrants and people with a physical or intellectual disability.

Other individuals and groups who may benefit from the GOTAFE Social Justice Charter include:

- people living in remote or rural areas
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities
- parents / carers of young children
- women
- older people
- people on the autism spectrum or with behavioural challenges
- low income earners
- people studying on non-major GOTAFE campuses.

‘The most significant thing GOTAFE could change to be more welcoming, inclusive and equitable is not making a big issue about certain groups as then it does single them out.’

GOTAFE community member

‘The intersectional approach...recognises that there are particular consequences when two or more forms of discrimination interact. Conceptualising discrimination on the basis of a single attribute in isolation hinders our ability to respond effectively.’

Australian Human Rights Commission, **2018**

GOTAFE's Community

Key characteristics

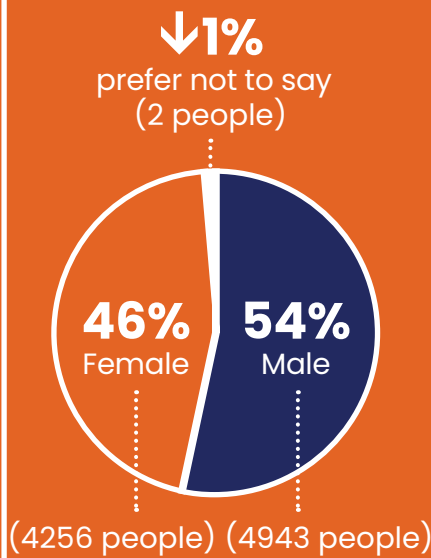


2019 student population:

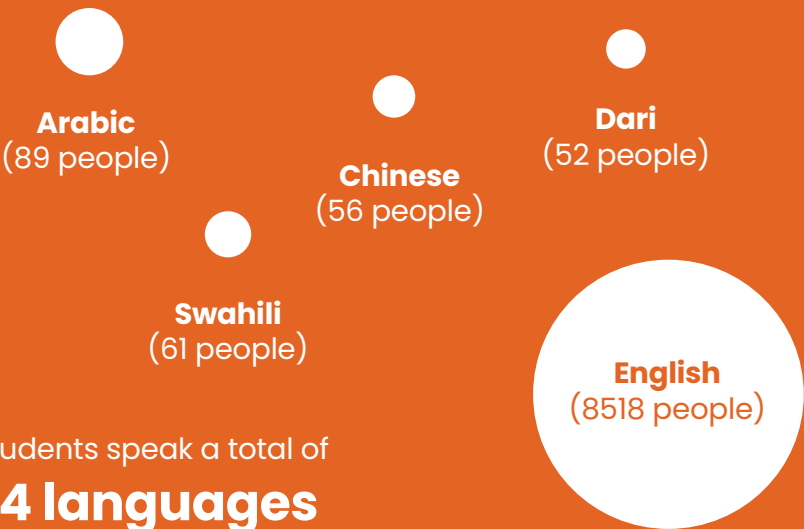
9201 individual people



Students live in **1049** different towns with the majority living in Shepparton and Wangaratta.

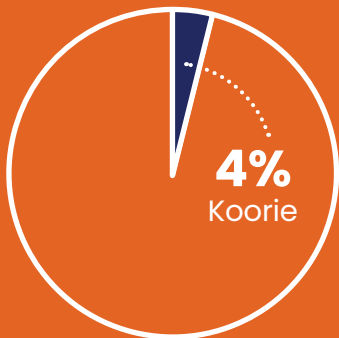


Genders identified by the student population.

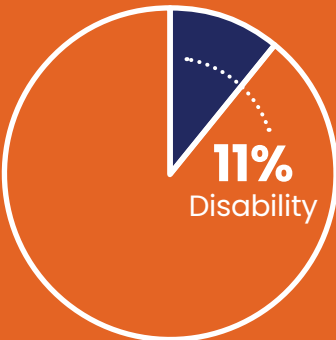


Students speak a total of **74 languages**

The most dominant languages spoken are English, Arabic, Swahili, Chinese and Dari.

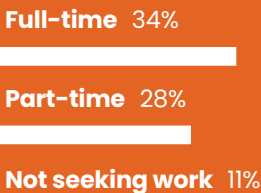


Of the 2019 student population 393 students identified as being Koorie.



981 people identified as having a disability.

Students employed:

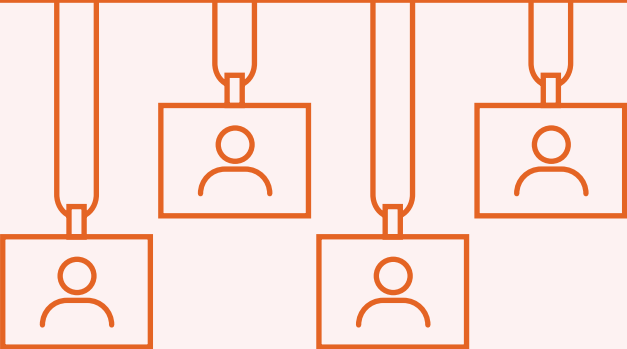


Students seeking work:

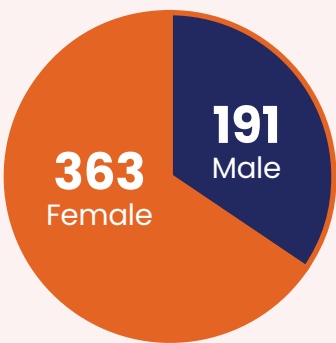


GOTAFE's workforce

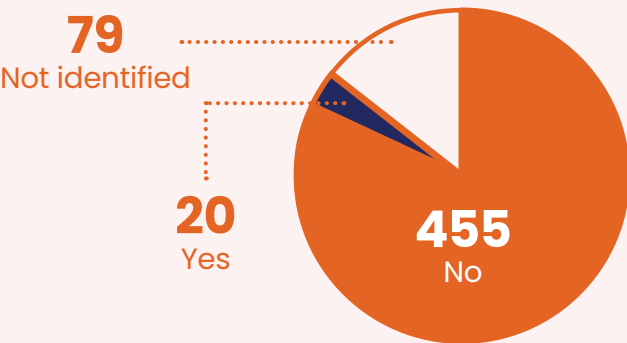
Key characteristics



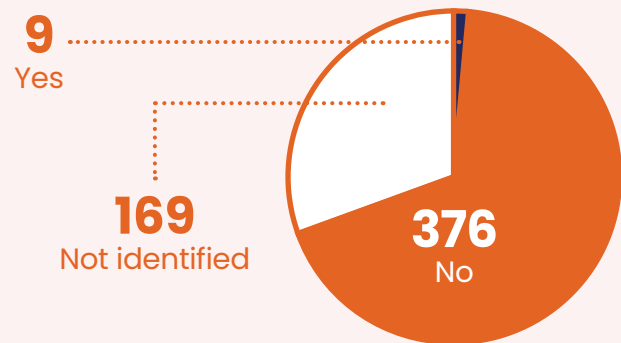
554 staff members



Genders identified by the staff population.



20 staff members identified as having a disability.



Staff members who identified as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.



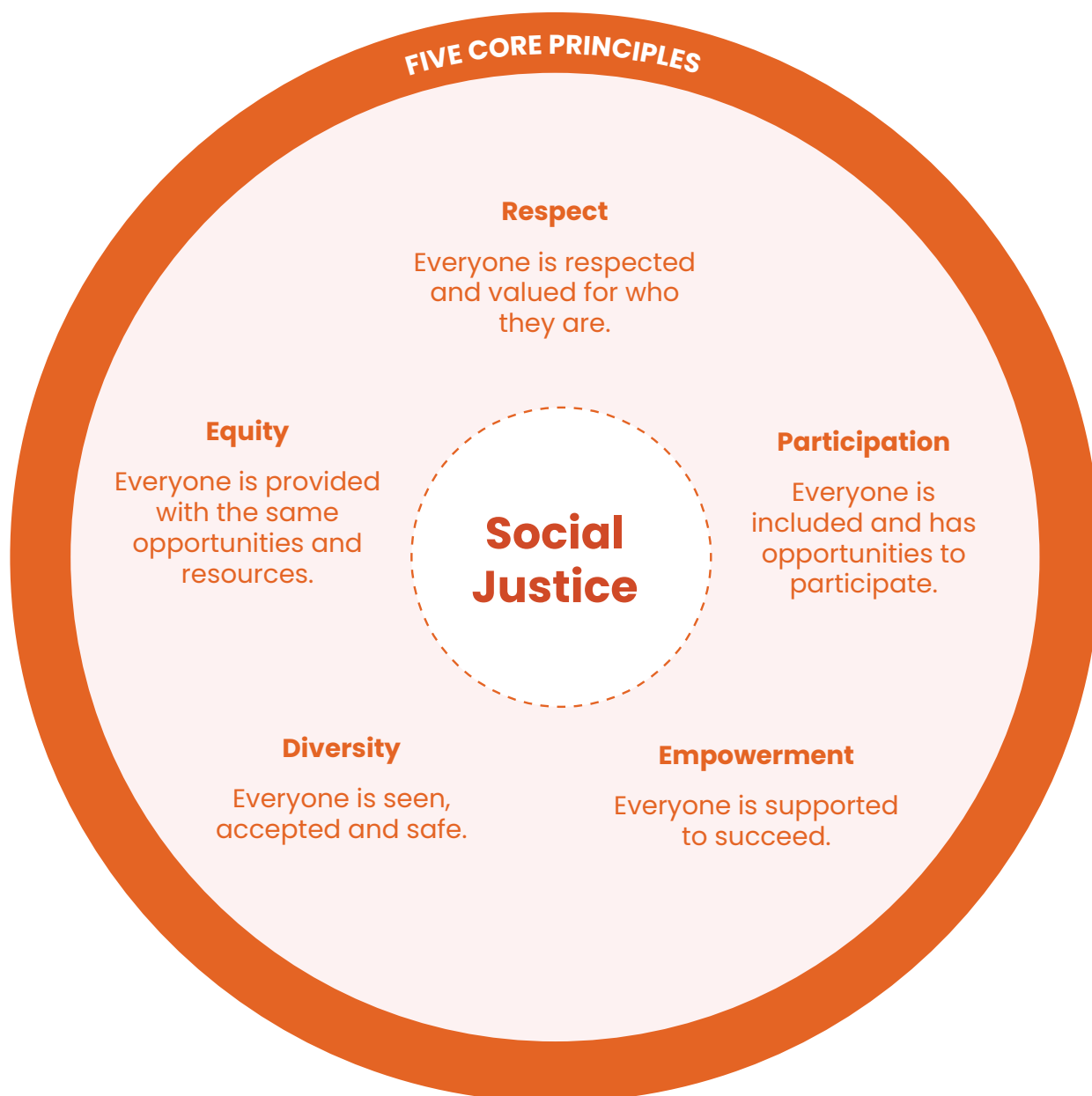
Country of origin **15** Not identified



Commitment and principles

GOTAFE is committed to equity and celebrating diversity, recognising that social structures mean that not everybody has had the same opportunities. GOTAFE will lead the education sector to make sure that all students, staff, teachers, trainers and the broader community are treated with fairness and respect, valuing the diversity of the community.

There are five principles at the core of how GOTAFE will champion social justice.





Commitment to priority groups

GOTAFE acknowledges that there are groups within the incredibly rich and diverse community we serve that require additional commitments to address barriers to accessing educational opportunities and inclusive work environments. We use the term 'equity' rather than 'equality' as equity takes into account the systemic barriers that may need to be reduced or removed for everyone to have access to equal opportunities. GOTAFE also acknowledges the impact of intersectionality in that some individuals face multiple forms of discrimination due to their identities or experiences across more than one of the groups outlined on the following page.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

GOTAFE are committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure a cultural safe and inclusive environment at GOTAFE. We acknowledge the richness of experience and cultural knowledge held across the communities we work within.

LGBTIQ+ People

GOTAFE are committed to working with the LGBTIQ+ communities across the regions we serve to celebrate diversity and embrace the unique contribution this community has made within regional Victoria.

People Living with a Disability

GOTAFE are committed to working alongside people living with a disability to provide access to opportunities that take into account the individual needs of staff and students.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people

GOTAFE are committed to work with the vibrant and diverse multicultural communities across the regions we serve. We celebrate the unique contributions these communities have made to our GOTAFE culture.

Young people

GOTAFE acknowledges the unique needs of young people across our regions and the additional barriers that young people in rural and regional Victoria face in accessing educational and employment opportunities. We are committed to working alongside young people to provide pathways to achieve aspirations and goals.

'Indigenous peoples continue to face challenges in accessing education that fully recognises the diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures.'

Gillian Triggs, former President of the Australian Human Rights Commission

'Almost 80% of trans young people have experienced issues with school, university or TAFE [and have higher rates of poor health outcomes] than those who have not experienced issues.'

Trans Pathway Survey 2017

'Equal access to educational opportunities is considered a fundamental right, according to the Australian constitution. However, it is clear that when it comes to delivery of such educational opportunities to disabled people, real educational opportunities are hard to come by.'

People with Disabilities and Carer Council

'People born in countries where English is not the main spoken language are three times as likely to experience discrimination in the workplace and twice as likely to experience discrimination in education.'

Australian Human Rights Commission

'Young people are disproportionately vulnerable to both unemployment and unstable or casualised employment. In January 2015, 16.5% of young Victorians aged 15-19 who were not in full-time education were unemployed and looking for full-time work.'

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria



Social justice actions

The five social justice principles will be delivered through a series of actions that have been identified in collaboration with students, staff, teachers, trainers and the broader community. There are also specific actions that have been outlined for targeted groups of the GOTAFE community. The overarching actions are divided into key focus areas:



Infrastructure focusses on the physical aspects of GOTAFE and providing accessible, safe and appropriate spaces.



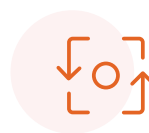
Policy focusses on organisational wide social justice directives.



Education focusses on staff, teachers and trainers providing support for students and each other.



Learning and Teaching focusses on students and their experiences at GOTAFE.



Celebration and awareness focusses on building awareness of social justice through targeted communication and providing opportunities for people and communities to connect.

In addition to this a series of targeted action plans have been developed to ensure that groups who are more likely to experience disadvantage are represented and considered specifically in the Social Justice Charter. The actions defined above apply across all of these groups; though it is recognised that specific attention and deliberate efforts are required to ensure equity. The groups with targeted actions are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- LGBTIQ+
- Multicultural communities
- People living with disability
- Young people



Review



GOTAFE recognises that continual improvement is essential. The Social Justice Charter will be reviewed every three years to ensure relevance, and so any new or emerging issues can be addressed. The actions will be reviewed and refined annually by Social Justice Champions and the GOTAFE Board and Executive Team.

The Social Justice Charter review is about more than just understanding whether actions were completed; it is about understanding the overall impact on students, staff, teachers, trainers and the broader community. As part of this review, there will be annual social justice engagement to understand the views of a cross-section of the students, staff, teachers, trainers and alumni populations. This will include a baseline survey at the launch of this Social Justice Charter to track future progress and change.

Keeping the GOTAFE community informed of the progress of the Social Justice Charter is a key part of the review process. Annually a report card showing the outcomes of the review and documenting the progress that has been made will be produced.

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