

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Acting Minister for Skills and TAFE



Friday, 31 May 2024

UPSKILLING VICTORIANS TO BOOST LOCAL HEALTH TECH SECTOR

People living with a disability will benefit from more locally manufactured disability devices thanks to an innovative training program backed by the Allan Labor Government.

Acting Minister for Skills and TAFE Natalie Hutchins today welcomed a new initiative by NORTH Link to help boost local manufacturing skills in the design and production of assistive technology.

This new training program is supported by \$1.2 million from the Allan Labor Government and will help service providers improve assistive technology products and teach healthcare providers more about how these products are made.

Assistive technology includes equipment, tools, software and devices ranging from wheelchairs and mobility aids to screen readers and voice-controlled home appliances. This technology helps the elderly and people with disabilities to perform daily activities that might otherwise be difficult.

NORTH Link, Swinburne University and Bendigo Kangan Institute of TAFE are collaborating with the health and manufacturing industry, allied health professionals, and people with disabilities and their carers to develop the targeted training program.

With majority of assistive technology devices being imported into Australia, having an upskilled local workforce will result in assistive technology being more readily available and fit-for-purpose, leading to better life outcomes for people who rely on it.

Health technology is one of the fastest growing sectors in Victoria, generating more than \$3 billion worth of exports and supporting more than 51,700 jobs across the state. This initiative will help Victorians access the training and skills they need for a rewarding career in the advanced manufacturing sector.

The *Victorian Budget 2024/25* invests \$555 million in Skills and TAFE to enable even more Victorians to upskill into meaningful, well-paid careers. This means key initiatives to support students, TAFEs, training providers and industries can continue, including more than \$1 billion a year for subsidised training places.

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Skills and TAFE Natalie Hutchins

"We're backing our healthtech sector to address current and future health challenges, and we're supporting Victoria's world-class TAFEs to provide the training and skills needed for a new generation of jobs in this industry."

"This project is a shining example of how collaboration between training providers and industry can ensure Victorians get the skills they need for the jobs they want in areas of high demand."

Quote attributable to Member for Broadmeadows Kathleen Matthews-Ward

"This innovative program will empower people living with disabilities by providing them with more locally manufactured, high-quality assistive devices, while also boosting our local workforce."

Quote attributable to NORTH Link Executive Director Chris James

"This funding has enabled NORTH Link to work together with the health, education and manufacturing sectors to develop learning materials designed to enable customised local manufacturing of assistive technology devices that will improve the experiences of disability and aged care clients."

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