

## Healthy Region Project to explore opportunities for health, care, job creation and innovation

Existing strengths in the eastern region's health care industry will be explored and potentially expanded through a new Health Innovation and Care Economy Regional Investment Strategy to be led by the Eastern Region Group of Councils (ERG) in partnership with the State Government's Metropolitan Partnerships.

ERG Chair Cr Michelle Kleinert said funding received via the Metropolitan Partnerships Development Fund would be used to undertake the Health Innovation and Care Economy Regional Investment Strategy - otherwise known as the Healthy Region Project.

Cr Kleinert said region-wide research and engagement would strengthen collaboration around priorities in the health and care sectors, support economic recovery and lead to potential long-term benefits through job creation and business innovation building on the regions strengths in these sectors.

"The east is already known as one of Melbourne's 'healthiest' regions, and we have a highly skilled labour force. This project is about cementing our region's strengths and leveraging them for further growth and innovation in the region's already strong advanced manufacturing, health innovation and care sectors," she said.

Cr Kleinert said rapid technological changes and accelerated changes in patterns of work post-COVID presented the perfect opportunity to leverage existing regional strengths and position the eastern region as a core contributor to Victoria's nation leading role in health innovation.

"The east - home to the Monash National Employment and Innovation precinct, Monash Health, Eastern Health, and numerous universities - has significant locational advantages in medical research, health services, training and skills development, pharma and bio sciences, and the care economy as well as a healthy natural environment," she said.

"We hope this project will lead to further initiatives to secure the eastern region as a leader in these sectors."

Victoria's health care sector, which contributes more than \$30 billion to the health care economy, is already considered a world leader in health and medical research - with 70% of the top 25 Australian MedTech and pharma companies based in the state and almost 60% of Australia's pharmaceutical exports coming from Victoria.

The Healthy Region Project aims to develop deeper partnerships between health, research, business and government by better aligning industry development with future health care needs within the community.

The main aims of the Healthy Region Project include:

- Leveraging existing regional strengths, including local world-class health precincts and research and development capacity
- Capitalising on current government investment and project future growth and innovation, such as MedTech, medical/health precincts and clinical trials
- Future-proofing against regional vulnerabilities and health challenges, such as an ageing population and COVID-19 recovery
- Addressing current and projected workforce and skills shortages being experiences in nursing, aged care, disability care, highly skills innovative professionals and entrepreneurs.

Key outcomes of the project are:

- Prepare the region to better adapt, grow and become resilient to rapid growth and economic structural change
- Improved understanding of the region's sectoral and sub-sectoral strengths, gaps and opportunities
- Progress an identified initiative that assists to position the region to shift towards health care and innovation.

For more information, visit <u>www.easternregiongroup.org.au/Projects</u> or <u>www.suburbandevelopment.vic.gov.au/metropolitan-partnerships/eastern-partnership</u>

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