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For Immediate Release

MEDIA RELEASE: ABILITY LINKS IMPROVES LIVES AND THE ECONOMY, SAYS NEW REPORT

Ability Links NSW is improving the lives of people with a disability and their families, and is also having a positive economic impact across the state according to two independent reports released today.

The cost benefit analysis by consultants Urbis Pty Ltd found the Ability Links program contributes significantly to improving peoples' lives and returns an economic benefit to the community of \$3 for every dollar spent. At the same time, a social benefit analysis found the program is contributing to what social access experts describe as a "major shift" in community attitudes towards inclusion of people with disabilities.

Ability Links NSW is delivered by Social Futures across Far North Coast with Social Futures CEO Tony Davies saying the reports highlight the importance of the program for the community.

"These reports show that when people have the right supports and are linked into their community, everyone benefits.

"Ability Links improves the quality of peoples' lives resulting in increased optimism for the future and a greater sense of control over their lives. As the reports show, this flows through to real economic and social benefits that we all can enjoy.

"Ability Links works because it taps into an individual's passions and interests whilst also tapping into the wealth of skills, connections and goodwill already within our regional communities", says Davies.

The URBIS reports state that linked-in people report feeling safer, happier and more socially connected. People who engaged with the program also reported an increase in self-esteem and improvements in their relationships with family and friends.

Since its launch in 2014, Ability Links NSW has supported over 1,525 individuals and families across the Far North Coast and worked alongside community members, groups and organisations on 21,703 occasions.

Mr Davies said given the program's success, he hopes Ability Links will continue into the future as part of, or alongside the NDIS. "With such strong evidence that Ability Links provides value for money and generates strong social and economic benefits to both Government and the broader community, we see a strong future for this program.

"Ability Links will support the sustainability of the NDIS by diverting some people away from funded supports and improving the capacity of individuals and communities."





Ability Links NSW is a State Government program that supports people with disability, their families and carers to connect with their local community, achieve their goals and aspirations and live enriched and fulfilled lives.

Find full reports (to be uploaded Friday morning) at:

http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/individuals/inclusion_and_participation/ability_links_nsw

Local Story [North Coast]:

Having owned a successful café and become known for his signature dishes, Nate never expected to be out of work.

Being both vision and hearing impaired, Nate Quinell had trained his staff to support his needs and had earned the nickname “The Hurricane Chef” for his expertise in sharpening knives.

However, after moving from the Central Coast to enable him to get his new guide dog Keno, Nate found getting a new job extremely difficult.

Together with his Linker, Nate explored alternate options that could open up more opportunities for him to gain employment, but still stay within the food industry.

Recently, Nate completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and has taken up part-time employment with the College as well as the opportunity to run his own cooking classes.

Nate said he is loving his new role and being able to pass his skills on to the next generation of chefs.

“I’ve really enjoyed the teaching and the class has been really supportive. They all love having Keno around and I’ve had some really nice feedback from the students,” Nate said.

“Ability Links has been a huge support for me through getting my certificate and helping me get out and about in the community.

“I’ve even been able to do some public speaking which I have really enjoyed.”

Nate said he is currently looking at opportunities to teach people with vision impairment about food preparation, working on developing new course ideas and is keen to one day soon have his signature recipes published for everyone to enjoy.

Attached Image: Nate Quinell and his dog Keno

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Social Futures is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that promotes fairness and social inclusion in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.





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