

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP

Minister for Industry and Innovation
Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty
Minister for Employment
Minister for Public Transport



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NEW PLAYER IN PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS

The Andrews Labor Government is backing the development of an innovative chest protection vest as an added layer of injury prevention for women and girls who play contact sport.

Minister for Industry and Innovation Ben Carroll today announced that Breakthrough Victoria is investing \$148,000 into Geelong-based sportstech company Zena Sport, which has developed the world's most advanced breast and rib protection vest for women and girls who play contact sport such as football (soccer), AFL and rugby.

The Zena Z1 Vest is made from a liquid polyurethane foam that is injected directly into the fabric of the vest and moulded to create a single, seamless barrier between the ball or elbow and the breast tissue or ribs.

Designed in collaboration with Deakin University, the vest absorbs the initial impact of a blow and distributes the energy over a larger area to reduce the likelihood of injury. According to research undertaken by Zena, breast injury is an issue that lacks awareness despite the high instance of contact-induced injury among female athletes.

In addition to helping the company expand into more Australian retailers and key sports markets like the United States and Europe, the investment will also create more than 12 new jobs in the Geelong region.

Zena Sport was established in 2018 by former AFL team captain Brad Johnson and his partner Donna Johnson, after seeing the need for inclusive protective gear for women and girls who play contact sport.

The Breakthrough Victoria investment comes after the company was selected to participate in a sportstech focused accelerator program funded by the Labor Government's startup agency LaunchVic.

Breakthrough Victoria delivers a \$2 billion fund driving investment in key industry sectors like health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, agri-food, clean energy and digital technologies.

In addition to Breakthrough Victoria, the Government is providing targeted industry investments to drive innovation through \$5 million for LaunchVic's Alice Anderson Fund to support more women-led startups and the \$15 million Industry R&D Infrastructure Fund to incentivise local business to increase their R&D activity.

Quote attributable to Minister for Industry and Innovation Ben Carroll

"Investing into Zena Sport is another way that we are backing bold ideas that improve the lives of people – in this case women and girls who play contact sport – boosting our economy, while creating jobs."

Quote attributable to Breakthrough Victoria CEO Grant Dooley

"Zena Sport saw a gap in the market and seized the chance to develop the world's only scientifically tested chest protection vest for women and girls in contact sports – they are an example of what we look for in our investments."

Quote attributable to Member for Geelong Christine Couzens

"We back local companies like Zena Sport to expand because we know how important they are to grow jobs in our city and boost the economy."

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Quote attributable to Zena Sport CEO and founder Donna Johnson

“This investment gives us the opportunity to scale and grow our brand globally. Our Mission is to assist a new generation of females to perform beyond what they thought was possible and this investment will do exactly that.”