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Student's cancer battle inspires winning startup

A Sydney medical student who drew on his personal cancer battle to launch a winning startup is encouraging other students to join the free 12-month program that helped boost his entrepreneurial skills.

With the support of a \$10,000 grant from the City of Sydney, non-profit student organisation Textbook Ventures will again bring together experienced founders, academics, venture capitalists and aspiring tertiary student entrepreneurs.

Student, researcher and entrepreneur Nikhil Autar won first prize at last year's Textbook Ventures Student Startup Festival and has successfully launched his own business, Get to Sleep Easy.

His business has created the Smart Inclining Bed, a device which converts any bed into a hospital bed for a tenth of the price, and features a smart sensor system and app, Centered Around You, that monitors heart rate and breathing.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the startup sector is opening up new career opportunities for students.

"The City of Sydney is proud to support student organisation Textbook Ventures with a \$10,000 grant that will help them to put on great events like the Sydney Startup Festival, Careers Fair, and other programs throughout the year," the Lord Mayor said.

"A key objective of our Tech Startups Action Plan is to foster skilled and connected entrepreneurs, and I encourage students to get involved with Textbook Ventures' events so they can develop their business skills and network with successful entrepreneurs and investors.

"This is about supporting tomorrow's business leaders and fostering our dynamic startup ecosystem."

Nikhil Autar knows firsthand the benefits the program can deliver. As a cancer survivor, Nikhil's startup idea stemmed from devastating personal experience.

"Some of the biggest killers of people like me, older people and people with disability are common, preventable complications – things like falls, pressure sores and pneumonia," Nikhil said.

"I saw big problems that needed to be solved – ones that were taking way too many lives and costing way too much."

Nihil attended Textbook Ventures events and credits the lessons learnt with further successes, including winning Australian Student Startup of the year at the 2018 Startcon event.

"I would definitely encourage any student interested in starting their own business to join this free program because as a student entrepreneur, you need all the help you can get," Nikhil said.

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“Having access to industry leaders, meeting and hearing from investors, and learning from those already in the startup community, taught us so much.”

“You can make a business go from zero to everything in a short amount of time with the right advice and the opportunity to collaborate.”

Student Clinton Chan, general manager of Textbook Ventures, says a wide range of events and online content will help raise the profile of entrepreneurship.

“We know from experience that most students don’t see entrepreneurship or the startup ecosystem as a viable career path and instead pursue corporate careers,” Clinton said.

“Through our events, I hope students will be inspired by other students and learn from the speakers to create a career in tech. We want to show that becoming an entrepreneur really is attainable for so many students.

“For the wider startup community, this is an opportunity to meet some truly talented students who they can bring on board to work for their teams, mentor and support in the tech startup field.”

Information on the program is available at textbook.ventures/

The 2019 program of events includes:

- **Student Startup Stories** – a bi-monthly panel of industry experts and student startup founders will help students understand different types of startup areas
- **Diversity Programs** – showcasing the diversity of the startup ecosystem to help students realise that anybody can find a career and success in the startup ecosystem
- **Startup Careers Fair** – an opportunity to network and find jobs with leading Australian startup companies
- **Startup Festival** – an annual pitch competition to showcase and celebrate the top student-run startups from across NSW.

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