

# BENTECH BULLETIN

Third Edition October 2013

*“New technologies – New Abilities”*



*“NEW TECHNOLOGIES—NEW ABILITIES”*

**This** edition comes at the end of the first quarter of the Ben’s House Project. In those six months the project has gained a surprising amount of momentum. Interest and enthusiasm in the project has grown markedly over the period.

The number of people we have added to our list of participants has grown, probably two to three fold. As well as welcoming volunteers to our ranks, we have started to employ people on contract to carry out specific tasks.

*“Getting information off the Internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant.”*

We have almost completed the survey of 27 people throughout the state and we have established ourselves in the Mosman Park Community Men’s Shed. We have also started down the path of selecting equipment and writing software to operate the systems highlighted by the interviews.

## The Home of BenTech

After extensive discussions and negotiation we have set up an office and electronics facility at the Mosman Park Community Men’s Shed. The MPCMS is sited on the south eastern corner of the Tom Perrott Reserve on McCabe Street, Mosman Park. As well as our office/lab facility, we have access to the Men’s Shed electronics lab and all the woodworking and metalworking facilities that are available to the members of the Shed. We also have access to the Men’s Shed meeting room.

The members of the Shed have been fantastic in their response to us: many have offered their assistance, one of them, Gary Shepherd comes in two



afternoons a week to exclusively help us out.

A special thanks to our Friends from the Shed.

## Grant Money

In recent days we have been busy preparing an interim report to be submitted to the Department for Local Government and Communities. The submission of this report is a condition of us receiving the second tranche of our grant money.

The residual from the first tranche combined with the second tranche will be directed to the pur-

chasing of equipment that will be used for modelling actual systems that will be used in the trial houses.

## Interviews

We have now completed 27 interviews and have nearly completed the analysis and the writing of the survey report. The interim findings from the report have produced some very clear messages and hence directions for the project.

Being able to get in and out of the front door is clearly a priority for a large group of those interviewed. The second priority was for the client to be able to identify who is at the front door and therefore to decide whether to allow entry.

These two systems will be our first two priorities of the project.

Early in October we flew to the Kimberley to do five interviews in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing. It was a Monday to Friday trip that kept us very busy. We did take a couple of hours on the last afternoon to have a look around Broome, but the rest of the time was spent doing interviews and talking to related

*"Every man dies. Not every man lives"*

*William Wallace*

agencies in both towns.

The Kimberley interviews resulted in very different data than that we obtained in the south of the state. It was very clear that simpler, more robust systems were more appropriate for use up there.

The discussions with locals were invaluable for us. We spoke to local area coordinators from Disabilities Services Commission, carers and an officer from the Department of Housing.

We did discover that wheel chair maintenance and repair in the Kimberley was a major problem with one case de-



scribed of a manual wheelchair taking eight months for a repair to be carried out. We considered that to be completely unacceptable. We brainstormed the problem and

came up with the solution of having the maintenance and repairs done by locals. Being Men's Shed men we went off to the local Men's Shed and sought their interest in setting up a system whereby locals could utilise the Men's Shed for repairs and a regular maintenance program. Many of the repairs would not be necessary if a program of maintenance e.g. screw tightening and oil was carried out.

We are taking our discussions to other agencies to determine how such a program could be established. We do not have a desire to establish the program through BenTech, as it is out of our brief, but we very willing to add our expertise to help set up a program.

Special thanks must be paid to Nicole Cox from My Place who organised the interviews and many of the meetings for us, as well as joining us for many of the interviews and meetings. Thanks also go to Greg Lewis who accompanied us for some of the visits and provided the benefits of his own experience, particularly in the Kimberley. Further thanks must be given to all the locals who gave up their time so willingly to share their experiences and expertise.



## Emerging Technologies Group

Disabilities Services Commission, the State Government body that oversees disability in the State, has established a group of people representing the



**The BenTech Office and Lab**

agencies involved or interested with the use of technology to improve the lives of persons with a disability. We are pleased to have a representative on this body as it provides a good channel for the interchange of ideas. Gerri Clay the CEO of the Independent Living Centre in Nedlands, chairs the group and some of the meetings are held at ILC but others are being hosted by the various agencies represented in the group. The November meeting is to be hosted by BenTech at the Mosman Park Men's Shed.

The Emerging Technologies is a good medium to

share our developments to the disability sector and the broader community.

## The Door and Case

The case that is to be used for modelling essential operations is operational and almost complete. Thanks goes to Denham Dunstall who has given up his precious time to develop the electronics and write the software for the case's operation. The case, at this stage, can be operated by a smart mobile phone via a browser system but in the future will be capable of being operated by a range of different input devices. Being portable it can be taken to a client's home and used to trial different input systems.

The case operations will, in the near future, be able to be monitored anywhere in the world by the browser based system.

We have also built a half height, full size door in a standard frame which will become our testing facility for testing and demonstrating the operations of door opening, closing and locking. We intend to build further testing facilities like this for concept testing other functions of the house.

*"People who are really serious about software should make their own hardware."*

Alan Kay

The systems on this door will be similar to those on the case.

## BenTech Web Site

We now have a web site on line. It is in draft form and we would appreciate your comments as to its improvement.

The site address is [www.bentech.org.au](http://www.bentech.org.au).

**We thank you** for your support, your time and your willing participation.

## THE BENTECH TEAM



**Department of  
Local Government  
and Communities**

