

BENTECH BULLETIN

Seventh Edition December 2015

“New technologies – New Abilities”



“NEW TECHNOLOGIES—NEW ABILITIES”

We are Still Going!

Yes, we are still alive and kicking! Yes, life at Bentech has not been easy in recent months. The little balance we had in the bank was being whittled away by phone bills etc. but we were still solvent. What has kept us going has been the support (both moral and financial) from a large number of people with whom we are dealing. Everyone we have spoken too has said “You must keep it going, what you are doing has great benefit to people with a disability.” We always being encouraged to achieve our goal, and that’s what we will do!

Chuffed with our Crowd Funding

Bentech is running a crowd funding campaign with Chuffed which ends in March 2016. We are amazed at how generous people have been. The campaign has raised nearly \$12,000 so far, but more promotion and circulation is necessary. Bentech now needs more people to help promote the campaign and if they can, support the cause financially. The more people who are aware of our vision the greater our chance of success. Money is necessary for the success of Bentech, but we also need a groundswell of public support in order to sway government bureaucracy in its decision making.

Please go to <https://chuffed.org/project/bentech> to check out the campaign. While you are there please “share” us and forward the link on to your contacts.

“Artificial intelligence usually beats real stupidity.”



Rob Barr our “Chuffed” man

DSC Proposal- “Keep up the good work but we aren’t paying”

Before Christmas we submitted a proposal to Disability Services Commission (DSC) on behalf of ourselves, Independent Living Centre and Curtin University School of Occupational Health. Both of our supporting organizations have expressed a consid-

erable interest in our project and were excited to contribute their expertise and enthusiasm to achieving the vision of increased use of technology in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Unfortunately DSC decided not to fund the Ben's House Project. We believe from conversations we have had that the reason for the knock back is due to a lack of Government funds. To achieve our goals in this project we are heavily dependent on paying engineers to develop the technologies to enable our system to meet its objectives. Raising grant funds to achieve this is proving very difficult in terms of Government agencies who seem unfamiliar with product development and the long term benefits to them.

Our quest to complete the system and test it with people who actually have a disability continues despite the lack of financial support from Government. We are constantly encouraged by the people who see the benefits of such technology, including those who will ultimately use it.

New Blood for the Board

In our efforts to raise funds, we have become aware of the need to increase and broaden the representation on our board. The Bentech Board currently

"To err is human – and to blame it on a computer is even more so."

has seven members, meets monthly to provide guidance and credibility to our efforts and represents a wide range of necessary skills for good governance. We now seek a person, preferably who lives with a disability, is of high standing in the community and who represents and networks with large numbers of those who live with disability.



Rob Barr and Richard Allen on 7 News

Media Coverage "Did you see us?"

You might have seen some of our recent media coverage on both Channel 7 and the ABC. We have also been reported in the Post Newspaper and on ABC morning radio.

While this media coverage may look like grandstanding it does help increase awareness of what we are hoping to achieve while also uncovering valuable advice and support for our endeavour. We intend to continue this strategy in-

to the future to keep this conversation on the community agenda.

We need voluntary assistance to help us create and circulate the stories. Should you, or know someone who would be able to offer their time please let us know.

Fund Raising Appeal

We are currently spending most of our time submitting applications and proposals to philanthropic organizations to raise the funds required to complete the Ben's House Project. We feel we need approximately eighteen months and about half a million dollars to reach the original project goals. Incidentally, this was the same amount taken from us when our original partnership dissolved.

We need some help with this fundraising programme. If you have the skills and a background in fundraising please contact us.

Voluntary Support

Most of the work for Bentech is currently undertaken by just two part-time voluntary workers. This amount of labour is extremely limiting to the scope of endeavour required for our mission. We have recently listed the

tasks required for the future growth of our organization and are now seeking voluntary assistance to meet those tasks. The workload is not onerous and is very satisfying as each milestone is achieved. The skills we most need are in the areas of personal assistance (organizing, archiving and writing material) and in media liaison (contacting, drafting stories and liaising with various media outlets) We would also like some help and guidance in social media regarding a Facebook page and our established YouTube channel. We could also use some part-time technical help in the areas of software engineering and mechatronics.

At this point we cannot pay for any of this, but we are more than happy to write a reference or otherwise support a person's career development.

Next steps for Bentech

Although it has been a somewhat frustrating year that has passed, we are satisfied with the achievements we have made in consolidating our organization. These achievements include the formalization of the governing Bentech Board, the registration and compliance of the not-for-profit organization Bentech Assistive Technologies Inc and the achievement of tax deductible status with the Australian Tax Office. We have also prepared the ground for our first installation of an automation system in a home so we can start gathering evidence for the future path of the project.

Our Web Site and YouTube

www.bentech.org.au Is our website address, which also contains and archive of our previous newsletters.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCs9bfgYMtFJ1WgXF888MwVUg

is our YouTube channel which contains demonstration videos

Sincere thanks

...to all of those who have generously given money and contributed precious time to our cause

Thanks to our sponsors

As a result of our crowd funding campaign we now have a large number of private funders who have generously donated money to Bentech so that we may continue our efforts. Those who contributed substantial amounts to Bentech are:

G and S Hobday

Des Hill

M Ewing

P and A Wratten

B and R Boyd

"The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do."

B.F. Skinner

H and V Richardson

W Andrew

G and A Barr

Anonymous A

Sandi Horsfall



Department of
**Local Government
and Communities**

THANK YOU

(Please feel free to forward this newsletter on.)