

# BENTECH BULLETIN

Sixth Edition June 2015

“New technologies – New Abilities”



“NEW TECHNOLOGIES—NEW ABILITIES”

## After a Long Time

It is nine months since you would have received the last newsletter from us at Bentech. In that August 2014 newsletter we related that we had our state government grant “suspended” and we were in the process of undergoing a review into our operations. The result was that review was lost that we lost our funding without being told as to why. We were left to speculate. Many came to the conclusion that the government was in a position to take the some \$350,000 back as it would help balance their books. This left us in a situation where we again had to go out and raise funds to complete project. In order to raise the funds Bentech was required to seek chari-

table status and deductible gift status, both of which took an inordinate amount of time and energy. Having both of these now means we are in a position to receive philanthropic funds and the provider of those funds receives a tax deduction for the donation.

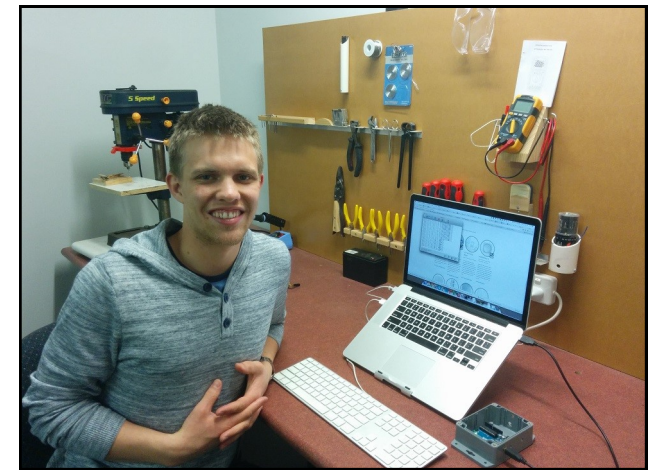
From our observations we are being held back by a bureaucracy who are not really aware of the needs of people with disabilities or those who care for them.

With our own funds rapidly dwindling we were forced to put off our three excellent workers and Richard and I went into voluntary mode. Colin Siew, who was contracting to us full-time has since moved to Germany, but in the few months before leaving, he worked for us as a volunteer. Alex still comes in on a voluntary basis to assist with minor

*“The problem with quotes on the internet is you can never be certain they're authentic.”*

*Abraham Lincoln “*

technical matters. I give our sincere thanks to all those who have stuck by us and given their time so freely as volunteers. Special thanks to Richard who has volunteered his time so willingly over the time.



**Daniel working in the lab**

Also a big thanks to Daniel who is working on the technical detail of the system in his time off as a fly-in-fly-out worker on Barrow Island.

We also give thanks to The Mosman Park Men's

Shed who have allowed us to use our office for the last two months free of charge. We intend to use some of our new funding to reimburse their costs of at least the electricity.

We are now working feverishly to find the funds so we can finalise the technical development of the Ben's House System and to set up a program for its delivery into the disability sector.

## We Need Help

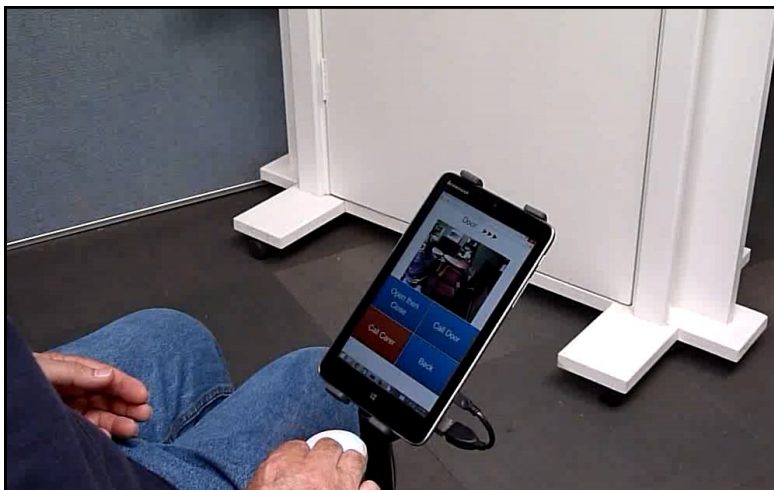
We need help in two directions. One is with fund-raising and the other is with staff.

In regard to fund-raising, we need contacts who might provide an avenue, directly or indirectly, to a source of funding. In the last weeks we have been making contact with as many philanthropic organizations as we can. These have been mainly mainstream companies like the big mining organizations, foundations and Lotterywest. We really need people who can offer us leads to these organisations. We are very happy to take over from there to meet with the relevant person and provide them with the information they will require. We have two documents that describe the rationale behind the project and the business plan. We can email these to you to

*“Our society will never go entirely paperless. There's always the bathroom.”*

inform you and others of what we are all about and where we are going.

In regard to staffing, we are in need of people with technical engineering skills and bookkeeping/accounting skills who are able to give us some of their time in a voluntary



**Rolling screen with button and voice response**

capacity until we can actually employ staff.

Specifically, we need a technical person who has extensive experience in electronics and software development. Maybe you know of somebody who was working in this field and has retired, lost their job or is working FIFO and has some time on their hands to help us out. In terms of administrative skills we are in need of a person who has bookkeeping/accounting skills to help out with all the administrative detail and compliance issues that come over

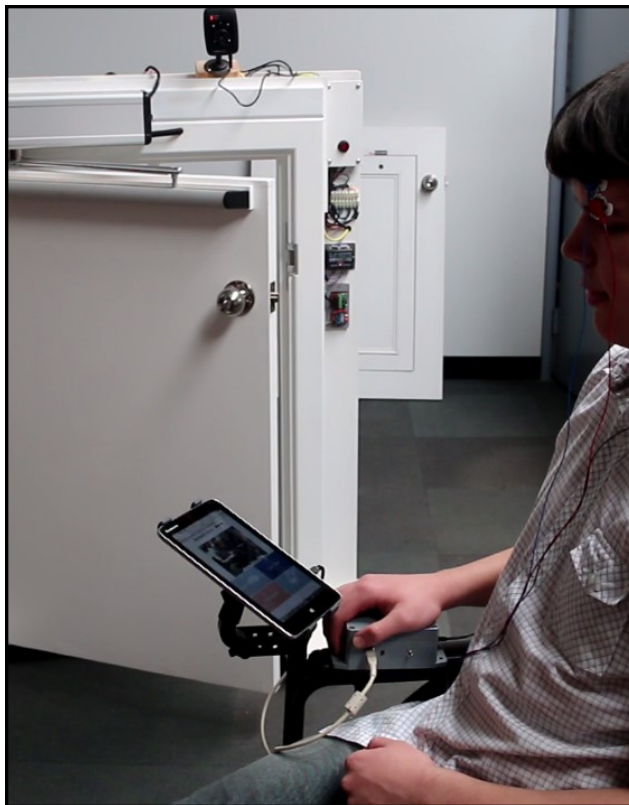
our desk.

If you have somebody who would be able to fill either of those roles please call or email us.

## Features of Our System

The major features of the Bentech system are:

- The system is capable of operating doors, windows, air-conditioners, TV's, sound systems, blinds, lights, power outlets, cameras, intercoms and the telephone.
- It operates from a browser-based menu just like a web-page meaning there is no complex installation or set up to use the system, even if you buy a new phone or tablet. It also means it operates on all operating systems like Windows, Apple or Android or Linux.
- It will handle multiple inputs, even at the same time. This means while one person may need to operate the house with a sip-and-puff switch, their carer can be operating things from a touch-screen or using them manually.
- It will control most actuators on the



**Opening a door with brow muscles**

market out of the box and is simple to connect to others. This means that new devices that come to the market are simple to connect in the future.

- It is very simple to customize the system to a individual's set of needs, or to modify it when those needs change.
- The system has an 'assembler package' and

test program so it could be installed by a DIY person or an electrician if mains power is required. Modifications can also be made by Bentech staff remotely if required. Also the health of the system can be monitored remotely meaning that faults do not need to be reported.

- The system can be freely shared with other authorized people like parents or carers without them having to install apps or go through complicated set-up procedures. It can also be used remotely via the web.
- All devices in the system are operated wirelessly meaning it is easy to install and does not require extensive or messy modifications to the house. This also means it is relatively easy to move to a new house should that be required.
- The components of the system are not expensive and are readily available from most stores or suppliers. It works in conjunction with the existing modem/router and uses very little energy to run.
- The system has the ability to control existing home automations systems offering increased control to users who have a disability.

*“ The last time there was this much excitement about a tablet, it had ten commandments written on it. ”*

- Finally, the system uses open architecture and API connections so it is simple for third-party manufacturers to add their devices to the system.

## Our Plans

We are in the process of “getting our name out there”. Bentech is well known within the disability sector and is now working hard to become known in the public arena. The better our public image the more likely we will be able to secure the funds to complete the project. We have a number of strategies in line to do this, but if you have some ideas or contacts to extend our publicity base, we would like to hear from you.

We do need to devote some time to the completion, testing and revisions to our “product”. This will need experienced technical staff. Bentech will seek out suitable people as soon as funds become available. Once the final system modifications are complete we will install the system in several trial homes so that we can fine tune its operation. This will be done in conjunction with a survey to determine the benefits and implications of the system for a person living with disabilities. Then will come the implementation of a program to take the



system out to a larger number of people for more comprehensive trailing.

Finally we will need to develop a strategy to make the Ben's House system available to all those who have a need and incorporate a form of licensing which will help fund Bentech projects into the future.

## Thanks

Again there are so many people who we need to thank.

The last six months have been very stressful, but the advice and assistance that has been offered by the Bentech Community has made it all worthwhile. So many people have stepped up to help with advice and time. We can sincerely thank all of you who have assisted us for your faith in us and your continued support.

Special thanks go to Colin who, when we ran out of money and were unable to pay him, he was willing to remain on in a voluntary capacity to complete some of the work that he was doing and to document the whole system before handing over to his successor. Colin is now in Germany, learning German, with the intention of getting a job there. We all offer him the best with his new endeavour.

Alex is coming in to help us when we need advice or the system needs fine tuning. Daniel Vlahovic, a FIFO worker with Chevron has recently joined us to help with the project. Daniel, Colin and Alex have remote access to the software of the system which enables them to make additions to make changes. Tristan Davies, a final year student from Curtin University was giving us one day a week of his time last year and is still keen to help us out. To all of these keen participants, we thank you sincerely.

Despite all the health problems Jenny Lalor has undergone in the past months she has always been there to help us out. Jenny and husband Tony have stepped up to provide their time and expertise. Tim Hantke has also been of assistance to the organisation. His knowledge, guidance and extensive contact base have been invaluable.

The Bentech Community continues to expand, each week we have people who call us or see what we are doing and offer their encouragement and often their assistance. To them, thank you, like all the others who make up our community. You make our efforts worthwhile.

*“ The last time there was this much excitement about a tablet, it had ten commandments written on it. ”*

## Our Web Site

[www.bentech.org.au](http://www.bentech.org.au) Is our website address

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