

Technology can enhance capability

A sense of control and security at home has the ability to change lives.

Opening the door, turning on the light, changing the TV channel. Many of us take such simple tasks for granted. But for people with disabilities, they can be barriers to living an independent life.

Ability Technology aims to change that. A non-profit organisation based in Balgowlah on Sydney's northern beaches, Ability helps people with disabilities to use assistive technology.

Founder and executive director Dr Graeme Smith says advances in technology have been life-changing for people with disabilities.

"As technology has bounced along at rapid pace, almost every change has a benefit for people with disabilities," Dr Smith says. "But this doesn't happen automatically - it needs to be appropriated by organisations that link the changes to the individual."

Ability specialises in assistive technology for home and work: operating doors, lights, windows, mobile phones, fans, heaters and home security systems.

"The home is the centre," says Dr Smith. "When people feel secure and competent in their home, that can spill over into other



Ability Technology aims to remove barriers to independence for people with disabilities by connecting them with assistive technology.

domains in life." For more than 25 years, the organisation has helped thousands of people become more independent.

Ability's technical, occupational and research teams operate across NSW, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland.

Team members undertake client assessments at home, school or workplace, recommend technology, supply and customise systems for clients and provide training and

support. "If something doesn't work for one of our clients, we take it back and try something else," Dr Smith says.

"We're not here to flog products. We want to change lives."

Ability allows people with disabilities to explore home control options via a virtual smart house, at abilityhouse.org.au.

"The AbilityHouse website respects the freedom of individuals to choose for them-

selves, but it is also embedded with professional expertise to nourish those decisions," he says.

The group has undertaken research on speech recognition, home automation and use of computers by people with traumatic brain injuries.

"We feel we can't recommend things to clients without thorough research and testing. We don't just jump into every new thing that comes out," Dr Smith says.

'[Technology] enables people to express themselves, fulfil their potential and to fully be a part of the community.'

- Dr Graeme Smith

Along with new levels of independence, assistive technology can increase the productivity of people with disabilities by enabling them to study, develop skills and work. It can also enhance their sense of connection with family and friends.

"It enables people to express themselves, fulfil their potential and to fully be a part of the community," he says.

"That's distinct from the benefits in self-confidence and self-esteem that flow from being more independent."

With new avenues of funding available through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), people may explore new options.

"As the NDIS rolls out, more people will have access to these tools to enable them to be more productive, connected and independent," Dr Smith says.

"Often people with disabilities are adjusting to what they can't do. We have the great privilege of showing them what they can do."

INDEPENDENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The NDIS is allowing more people than ever to have greater independence and participation through communication and home control technologies.

With over 25 years at the forefront of the assistive technology sector, Ability Technology is your place to get started.

From smartphones and tablets to automatic doors, our specialist team members will assess your needs and help find the right assistive technology solution for you.

We are a registered NDIS service provider, with team members based in Sydney, Western Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and ACT.

Ability TECHNOLOGY:

- Assistive Technology Assessments
- Expert Reports
- Training and Technical Support
- Registered NDIS service provider
- Registered charity with ACNC
- NSW, Canberra, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide



For more information or to get a quote visit www.ability.org.au
Or send an email to info@ability.org.au

