

# Ability Newsletter

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## X-Keys Macro Stick

### Helpful add-on

X-Keys are famous for devices that store keystrokes and key combinations. This Macro Stick is no exception.

This innovative tool is also a powerful time saver. Each of the 16 keys is able to be dedicated to macros up to approximately 1000 characters. The real beauty of this product

is that it fits neatly above the function keys on your keyboard. It is very easy to program. USB and PS/2 models are available. Dimensions: 362mm x 23mm x 18mm.

It sells for \$229 inc.



## Cordless Pen Mouse

This device has a rubberised grip, 1000dpi resolution and rechargeable Li-battery. It is USB plug n play. It works on almost any non-reflective surface. It is available from Ability for \$107 inc.



## Computer Access

### Wireless Compact keyboard + Touchpad



Compact keyboards that are wireless and have a built-in touch pad are very hard to find. But we've found one. It is an accessory for Sony Vaio, but it works on any computer. It has a range of up to 10m, weighs 1130gm and is 400 x 31 x 173mm. It has a USB receiver.

It also comes with a wireless mouse, which you can use in place of the touchpad, should you wish. Model number is VGPWKB1 and rrp is \$249 inc.

This mini keyboard works with the touch of a wand (hand-held or mouthstick). The keys are "zero force - no strength required". It incorporates simultaneous mouse control - click, drag, double click and 11 speeds. It also "never needs 2 keys touched at once".

Its dimensions are 7" x 6" x 0.5". No training or installation is required. The cost is between US\$1,595 and US\$1,895, while the Macintosh version costs US\$1,695.

Not a new product, but a unique one. As the makers say: "The keyboard is designed for people with disabilities that include muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, neurological disorders, arthritis, arthrogyrosis and severe repetitive stress injury".

### Magic Wand Keyboard



## Home and Phone Control

### Voice Dial Mobile Palm Treo 650 with VoiceSignal

VoiceSignal is an inexpensive option for the Palm Treo 650 phone/organiser. While the Treo is a very useful device in itself, with full Palm capabilities plus a GSM phone, MP3 player and camera, the voice dialling option adds an extra dimension of functionality. Holding down a button on the side of the Palm opens the VoiceSignal program and the verbal prompt "Say a command". You then have the choice of call someone in your Contacts list by name, or you can dial a number by saying the digits. No voice training is required for saying a name, and a list is given to choose from. The program speaks: "Did you say [name]?" thus giving you a chance to confirm or change. If the person has more than one number, the program asks: "Which number?" and you respond with "work" or "mobile" or whatever. We found dialling by speaking the numbers didn't work until we took up the optional training for numbers. After training 10 very short number sequences we were able to speak numbers with very high accuracy. The software costs US\$20.



***If we can get voice dialling on a mobile phone, why can't we get it for a normal phone??***

### BravoTango Phone for ECU

This ECU system connects your mobile phone via bluetooth to special receivers. Switch access (2 switch only at present, but single switch scanning is coming) is also an option. A bluetooth to infrared controller is also coming (\$845), which would better integrate the system with standard ECU components. In the meantime you must use expensive BravoTango receivers (\$975 each) that control up to 3 devices each. The BravoTango software costs \$650 while the Administrator software costs \$130.

The switch access software costs \$520 while the Switch Access Module costs \$975.

We have not tested this item yet. More technical information can be obtained from Novitatech ([www.novitatech.org.au](http://www.novitatech.org.au)).



# Home and Phone Control

## Pronto by Philips

For some people, by choice or necessity, a touch screen ECU is desirable. It saves having to learn codes and commands, offering instead options based on icons.

The Philips Pronto range offers a number of useful features, including customisable user interface (through PC software), IR learning from another remote (as well as an extensive IR code database), backlighting, macro capability (to access a string of pre-programmed commands from a single button) and automatic power off.

The basic model, the **Pronto Neo 930**, has 4 shades of grey, a 160 x 100 pixel display, 1 Mb memory, RS232 connection and limited customisation. It costs \$389.

The **Pronto NG 950** has 16 shades of grey, a 320 x 240 pixel display, 4Mb memory, USB connection and full customisation. It sells for \$889.

The **Pronto Pro NG 980** has 65,536 colours, a 320 x 240 pixel display, 32 Mb memory, USB connection and full customisation it sells for \$1649.



There is also the larger **iPronto 1000** (shown) which sells for \$3999. It weighs just under 1kg, has a larger 6.4" colour display with 640 x 480 resolution, has microphone and speakers, WiFi capability and internet browser. TV listings can be downloaded from the Internet.



We believe these devices can be programmed through another remote (such as the Marmitek or GEWA Prog) to control home appliances and X-10 modules.



## Ability Services

### Online Technical Support

Ability is currently trialling a new system of technical support. It allows us to take control of a client's computer and undertake diagnostics, run programs, perform updates and general support activities. This facility will also enable advice and training to be given on line.

Security is preserved in that only the client can initiate the support, the client can see exactly what is happening and the client can resume control of their computer at any time.

Our hope is that this service will enable a higher level of support to be offered to those in rural and remote areas. We will keep you informed of details.



*Individual training and support is the best, but on-line services can also help.*

### On-line Training

Individual, one-on-one training tends to be expensive. It involves travel and it may only be possible in short sessions (due to the person's disability).

If the training need is for generic programs (such as Microsoft Office) then one solution is to use on-line training. New Horizons provides such a service. For a fixed fee you have unlimited access to their on-line training programs. For example, the **Microsoft Office Pack** library includes courses in Access, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint and Word, as well as courses covering the upgrades between different versions of Microsoft Office. The cost is \$354 per annum. The **Office Productivity** library provides training in word processing, spreadsheets, desktop databases and presentation tools. Specific course topics include applications such as Microsoft Office, Microsoft Windows, Lotus Smart Suite and FrontPage. It costs \$453 per annum.

The advantage of this type of training is that you can undertake it whenever you wish, for how long as you wish, as often as you wish.



# Ability Services

## Ability Training Days

### New dates for 2006

Our popular training days are being conducted again in 2006 and we have set the dates early to assist those who need to plan ahead.

The training days provide an ideal opportunity for therapists, teachers, disability works and people with a disability themselves to gain first-hand experience in a full range of assistive technology options. The sessions are conducted over a full day in the friendly setting of Ability House at Seaforth. Only small numbers are accepted, to enable the full involvement of those present.

Two sessions are scheduled for the first half of 2006:

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

Methods for controlling lights, TV, curtain, doors and fans. Control options via remote control, touch screen, voice operation or computer.

- See how these systems are setup and used
- See how these systems work
- Study the pros and cons of each
- Learn how to assess needs in this area

**FRIDAY MARCH 17**

**9:30 - 4:00**

**Great lunch provided**

#### COMPUTER ACCESS

Alternative text entry and mouse control options, both hardware and software.

- Including speech recognition
- See portable notetakers as well
- Also literacy development software
- Learn how to assess needs in this area

**FRIDAY MARCH 31**

**9:30 - 4:00**

**Great lunch provided**

**PLEASE! Book early for these courses!** Places are strictly limited. The cost is \$250 per person, including lunch, notes and CD.



## Ability Activities

### Ability - External Involvements

It has been an interesting period for Ability staff recently! Lynda Hutchinson has been to Cairns, Toowoomba and Adelaide, while Graeme Smith gave the opening address at the Assistive Technology Alliance of New Zealand (ATANZ) annual conference in Wellington in July, before presenting several papers at an assistive technology conference in Singapore in September.

We also enjoy sharing our experiences in the form of workshops and papers locally.

*Graeme Smith with Mickey Milner (Founding Director of the Ontario Rehabilitation Technology Consortium, Canada) at the Global Entropolis conference in Singapore in September 2005*



### Comparative product reports

Objective information that compares assistive technology products is hard to find. Those who distribute products have as their main objective the sale of products, hence the information they provide may not be completely objective. Also much of this information gathers specifications from producers, rather than involving genuine testing in real-life conditions.

For these reasons Ability Technology has commenced the task of undertaking its own comparative testing of computer access products. This is time-consuming and is being done without any financial support. But we are pleased to offer this service to the disability community.

The tests so far have covered:

- Portable Notetakers
- Pointing Systems based on Head Movement
- Speech recognition

The reports are all available on our web site. Comments and suggestions welcome.



# Ability News

## University course

Preparations are well underway for Ability Technology staff to conduct a Professional Elective one semester course in assistive technology for final year Occupational Therapy students at Sydney University. The course will commence in 2006. It is an exciting step forward in our work.

## Brain Injury Project

We are nearing completion of our study of the role of assistive technology in the employment of people with brain injury. This study was undertaken for the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW

## Holiday Closing

The Ability office will be closed from 24 December 2005 and reopening on Monday 9 January 2006. Phone messages can be left during that period for later attention.

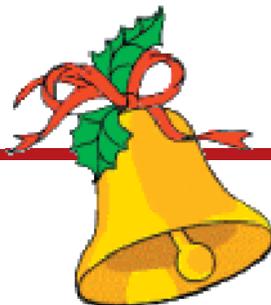
## Trips and Talks

Lynda just returned from a trip to the Orange area. A workshop was presented to staff at St George Special School. Lynda and Graeme both presented papers at an educational conference held at Newcastle University. Graeme Smith and Lynda Hutchinson are conducted some workshops and assessments in **Canberra** in early December (6th - 8th).

## Ability Video

Ability is preparing to create some digital video footage, to train people in the use of assistive technology. Shooting should take place at the end of January 2006.

*We wish all our readers our best wishes for a joyful and restful Christmas season from all of the team here at Ability!*



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