



Grant helps commercialise automated self-loader

Tony White has invented an automated, self-loading hand truck that takes the hard work out of lifting.

What started as the solution to a delivery problem has now escalated into a business – with sales to groups as diverse as councils, plumbers, hospitals and plant nurseries.

Tony’s hand truck does 100 per cent of the lifting. It is perfectly suited to heavy and awkward loads weighing up to 250kg.

It’s designed so that one person can easily move heavy loads on and off utes and up and down stairs.

As Tony describes it, the hand truck was born out of necessity.

Four years ago, he was working as a warehouse supervisor, and being called out whenever the driver needed to haul his 120kg to 160kg deliveries up stairs.

“The driver needed my help for a third of his deliveries.

“I thought ‘this is ridiculous, there’s got to be a better way,’” Tony said.

Fortunately, Tony loves mechanics, engineering, cars and engines. So when he was faced with this problem, he was able to put his mind to thinking up a solution.

Tony has now set up a company, *Cheeta Australia*, which is manufacturing the hand truck and a series of attachments, invented in response to customer feedback.

Deciding to move from being an inventor with a product to running a business has been a big transition.

And he says one of his big breaks has been receiving a *Commercialising Emerging Technologies (COMET)* grant from the Australian Government.



Tony White’s automated self-loading trolley enables a single person to lift loads weighing as much as 250 kg.

“Because he’s completely independent, my business adviser can stand back and see the entire picture. He’s different to any other mentor I’ve spoken to.”
Tony White, Cheeta Australia founder.

As part of the *COMET* grant, a private sector business adviser works with the business to identify priorities and work out a tailored plan.

Tony received a \$64,000 *COMET* grant in 2008, and the business adviser spent the year helping the business with essentials such as ways to attract investors.

“Because he’s completely independent, my business adviser can stand back and see the entire picture,” Tony said.

“He’s different to any other mentor I’ve spoken to.

“What makes him so valuable is that there’s no bias, there’s no underlying financial interests.”

Tony said one of the first things the business adviser organised was market research to help the business identify its priority customers.

Plumbers are the first major customers identified by the market research.

“We found that plumbers are often going out by themselves to new housing developments to deliver and install expensive, heavy vanities and hot water units.

“These hot water units can weigh up to 130kg, they’re top heavy, fragile and some of them cost \$3000.”

The business adviser has also put *Cheeta Australia* in touch with potential investors, helped the company source manufacturers, develop an intellectual property strategy and structure a company board.



What started as the solution to a delivery problem has now escalated into a business.

Commercialising Emerging Technologies

COMET is a competitive grant program that helps early stage growth companies, spin-off companies and individuals commercialise their innovations.

COMET provides access to private sector business advisers and tailored services to help improve management skills and attract capital and partners.

It offers grants of between \$5000 and \$120,000 to successful applicants. Projects are supported for up to two years.

AusIndustry is the Australian Government’s principal business program delivery division in the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

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