

Tuesday, 7th October 2008

# Press release

Innovation news for the **real world**



## QUT takes to the skies



The QUT UAV team from the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering.

It may not have gone exactly to plan, however the next crop of Queensland University of Technology aerospace engineers certainly broadened their horizons at the 2008 UAV Outback Challenge in Kingaroy last month (Sept 23 - 25).

Sponsored by **bluebox**, the QUT team from the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering was scheduled to compete in the Open Search and Rescue Challenge during the event. However, an unexplained power failure during the demonstration phase of the competition caused QUT's purpose-built and specially

designed search and rescue uninhabited aerial vehicle (UAV) to crash, ruling the team out of the competitive stage of the event.

The QUT team, consisting of fourth-year Aerospace Avionics and Mechanical Engineering students Alan Underwood, Alex Martin, Alexandra Deitch, Bobby Gallagher, Daniel Kauter, Deane Chadwick and Peter Truss, had been working on a prototype, nicknamed 'Chuck', for the competition since November 2007.

"The competition provided us with a fantastic opportunity to design, construct, test and operate an autonomous, pilotless plane, or UAV," said team manager Alex Martin, who is in his fourth year of an avionics degree.

"Our UAV went through several iterations, with testing being completed right up until the event. Although it was heartbreaking for the team to experience its first crash at the event after a full year of test flights, we certainly found the competition to be valuable in terms of learning and networking, as well as being a lot of fun," he said.

"We have a backup aircraft that is nearly ready, and we are hoping to complete a demonstration flight soon for a group of third-year students who will take up the project next year. Hopefully they will build on our experience and knowledge, and go on to win the competition next year."

**bluebox** Chief Executive Officer Michael Finney said that QUT's participation in the event for the second year running illustrated the university's depth of knowledge and expertise in the cutting-edge area of avionics.

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“Currently UAVs represent the next generation of aviation technologies, however with advances in this area it may not be long until they become commonplace, keeping the skies safe.”

“**bluebox** is keen to support research and innovation in this area at QUT, and was thrilled to have the opportunity to sponsor the QUT UAV team in the 2008 event,” he said.

During the 2008 event, 15 teams participated in two challenges – with separate events for secondary schools, and university and enthusiast groups – to compete for \$70,000 in prize money. University and hobbyist entrants embarked on a simulated outback rescue mission to find and assist a lost bush walker using UAVs.

Held annually since 2007, the event aims to increase awareness of UAVs and provide students and enthusiasts with the opportunity to learn about an exciting component of the aerospace industry. For more information, visit [www.uavoutbackchallenge.com.au](http://www.uavoutbackchallenge.com.au).

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**\*\* A high-resolution image is available for media use.**