

The smoke alarm in your pocket and other winning apps

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What good is a smoke alarm if it goes off when you're not home? Credit: Jenn Durfey

Ever been woken in the wee hours by the bip-bip-bip of a smoke alarm that wants its batteries changed?

App developer Marcus Schappi had, and he saw a way to use broadband technology to fix it.

"When smoke alarms go off, they are really hard to turn off. When they tell you a [battery](#) needs changing, they do it at 2am," said Schappi.

His app, the [Bop Smoke Alarm](#), sends users an SMS (at a convenient time) when the batteries are getting low and allows you to switch off a false alarm without getting the ladder out.

It will also send you an SMS if your alarm is activated while you're out, and if you don't respond, will go ahead and call the fire station on your behalf.

The Bop Smoke Alarm is among a suite of apps selected as winners of the [Apps4Broadband competition](#), co-hosted by the [Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation](#), CSIRO, National ICT Australia (NICTA), Intel, iiNet, Foxtel, Pottinger NSW Trade and Investment and NBN Co.

The competition was launched to help Australians better understand what is possible through the smart use of broadband, said Colin Griffith, Director of the Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation (ACBI), a research unit led by CSIRO in conjunction with NICTA and NBN Co with funding from the NSW and Tasmanian Governments.

"We are on the dawn of a new 'App Age', where next generation broadband networks will allow us to better manage our home energy use, support the elderly living independently at home as well as providing us with more personalised entertainment content by connecting people in their homes with services enabled by sensors and cloud computing," said Colin Griffith, Director of ACBI.

By 2020, the average person will own six smart devices, allowing remote monitoring of everything from livestock to home appliances, he said.

"It's clear that a better broadband infrastructure will revolutionise the

way we access services in the home," said Mr Griffith.

Winner of Best App, Best Business-to-Business App and Joint Winner of Best Health, Education and Social Services App categories was [TutorBee](#), a web-based app that allows tutors to teach students remotely.

"We are aiming to provide all Australian students with the best quality tutors out there," said co-creator of the app, Lexi Thorn, adding that her team was in talks with regional schools to help connect rural students with top tutors thousands of kilometres away.

"The core of what we are trying to do is to remove some of the geographical barriers to education," said TutorBee co-founder Chris Barwick.

The app includes an online classroom, a market place where students can find tutors and a scheduling system. Around 600 tutors have already signed up to the app.

Winner of Best Media and Entertainment App was Pass the Popcorn, an app for chatting with friends while watching on-demand television.

"Shows like Mad Men and Game of Thrones inspired us to come up with the idea," said co-creator Teresa Leung, who worked on the project with ex-Google developer Alex North and Ardrian Hardjono.

The app, which is still in development, will allow users to make their feelings known on plot twists and turns with quick reaction buttons themed LOL, OMG and WTF.

The app also includes a countdown so remote users can all press play at the same time, and a feature allowing you to photograph your reaction to a shocking on-screen development.

Other competition winners include Pepster, a home-based breathing exercise [app](#) and device for Cystic Fibrosis patients and Senograph: a sensor management platform and prototype sensor for home air quality and detection of carbon monoxide.

CSIRO also launched today its the [App-treneur's Guide to Broadband Connected Services](#), which outlines opportunities for the development of new broadband-enabled applications.

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