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## ROBOTIC LAWNMOWER CUTS WEEKEND CHORE

The weekend drudgery of mowing the lawn could soon be a thing of the past thanks to three University of Newcastle graduates who have invented a robot lawnmower called LUCi.

Newcastle startup Elite Robotics has developed an autonomous lawnmower with a super-intelligent brain that fuses machine guidance control, camera vision and ultrasonic radar to take the pain out of garden maintenance.

The NSW Government helped the company develop a prototype of its technology at the Jobs for NSW-backed Eighteen04 incubator in Newcastle, and also with a \$25,000 Minimum Viable Product grant.

Elite Robotics chief design officer Luke De Bono said the robot lawnmower – named ‘LUCi’ - maps its environment and then uses artificial intelligence to mow a yard using the fastest path possible.

“Our secret sauce is the algorithms we use,” Mr De Bono said. “LUCi has technology which allows it to avoid obstacles. It can predict the path of an object and has an inertia measurement module so when it gets to a certain angle it shuts itself off.

“We think there is massive potential for our lawnmower. The global market for mowing products is \$38.1 billion and Australia has about 8% of this market. If we can attract just 1% of the market that would generate \$61 million in revenue.”

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW, Small Business and Skills John Barilaro said if Elite Robotics achieves its aim the Aussie tradition of weekend push-mowing could go the way of the tape deck and VCR, freeing up more leisure time.

“Fresh out of university, these enterprising graduates have combined their skills in mechatronics, industrial design and machine learning algorithms to develop a machine which has significant appeal and potential,” Mr Barilaro said.

Mr De Bono said the Jobs for NSW grant had been crucial in developing its prototype and his team had now grown from three to eight.

“The Jobs for NSW grant helped us create our next generation lawnmower and was the biggest help we’ve had since starting up. We’re now looking to produce LUCi in three sizes including for commercial use such as sports venues and golf courses.”