Designers win praise for excellence

By Claire Low

Developers behind innovations such as a system that sends money via text messages, a virtual reality world and software to help blind students learn programming were all lauded for excellence at an ACT awards ceremony yesterday.

The Australian Information Industry Association announced ACT winners of the state finals for this year’s iAwards, which recognise the most outstanding information and communications technology innovators in the state.

Founder and chief executive of mHITs, Harold Dimpel, won in the financial applications section for his payment service technology that allows users to send money from their mobile phone through an SMS text message, which acts as an instruction to authorise a funds transfer through a secure service.

The system is comparable to existing payment systems online, except it uses mobile phones.

Users register an account, transfer money into it and can then use it to buy products and services from other users in Australia.

To avoid fraud, the transactions are limited to $100 a day per account. The idea is the system can be used for “micro payments” — transactions of $20 or less for items that would normally be paid for in cash or are too small for a credit card payment.

“One example of a transaction might be, say, you bought me a coffee and I wanted to pay you back, or lunch or splitting a bill with friends at a restaurant,” Mr Dimpel said.

Other winners included ANU student Torben Schou, who won the tertiary student project award for his Uni Life system, which combines Nintendo Wii remote technology with Valve’s Source game engine to create a realistic virtual world.

CrimTrac won the e-government award for developing a national police reference system — a database that provides Australian police and law enforcement organisations with rapid access to criminal information nationwide.

The winners and merit award recipient will compete at the national iAwards on May 28 during Melbourne’s Technology Week.