

Innovative app wins awards

CREATING an app for construction workers to sign on or off site using just their smart phone has won University of Canberra students over \$35,000 in prize money at the Innovation ACT awards.

Mitchell Harmer and Alexandria Garlan, originally from Wagga, were part of a team of four ACT students who won the competition's major prize (\$25,000), as well as the ACT Government prize (\$10,000) and the pitch award (\$750), to put towards perfecting their application 'Sign on site'.

"The app is basically like a Facebook check-in for construction sites," Mr Harmer, an entrepreneur and innovation student, said.

"It's a simple, user-friendly interface but there's a lot going on behind the scenes for accurate reporting, which will ensure workers' safety and could also save company money.

"If an auditor visited a construction site and discovered there were workers who hadn't signed in or out, it could cost the company a \$3,600 fine.

"There is also potential for sites to be shut down or for loss of tenancy. Not to mention the potential for safety issues caused by not knowing which workers are on or off site."

In her third year of construction management, Ms Garlan is also a project manager for Banyan Construction and said safety on site needs to be made a priority, with their app being "a good start to changing the industry".

"The culture about workplace health and safety needs to change, people don't see it as a way of increasing productivity for a company and we want to help change that. It's important to me in my role that my workers are safe on site and appropriate measures are in place to ensure that," Ms Garlan said.

"The current systems are paper-based so



Mitchell Harmer and Alexandria Garlan, originally from Wagga, were part of a team of four ACT students who won over \$35,000 for an app.

Photo: Michelle McAulay.

workers have to sign a physical register when arriving or leaving a site. We know people aren't always doing this because of multiple entrances and exits located far apart, and some people have to physically drive to the paper registers, making it near impossible for them to follow the rules."

Ms Garlan and Mr Harmer, both 23, met while at high school in Wagga. The rest of

their team were software engineering students Peter Marshall and David Linsell, from the Australian National University, who developed the application.

The Innovation ACT competition, sponsored by the University of Canberra, ran over nine weeks and included workshops with industry as well as pitch competitions throughout and the major

prizes awarded on 30 October.

Mr Harmer, a former Apple business specialist, is now focusing on promoting their winning application, saying they are already working with ACT construction company Huen to develop it and are pursuing other avenues nationally.

■ **Read more on their website:** www.signonsite.com.au

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