ACS Foundation sponsors the Imagine Cup

From small beginnings in 2003, the Microsoft Imagine Cup has grown to become the world's premier student technology competition. To increase its profile in this country, the ACS Foundation will partner with Microsoft to officially sponsor and promote Australia's 2011 Imagine Cup.

In 2010, over 325,000 high school and university students from over 100 countries registered to compete in local and regional Imagine Cup competitions. Students form teams to find solutions to real world issues using innovative and applied technology, competing for fabulous prizes and recognition.

The Imagine Cup challenges students to 'Imagine a world where technology helps solve the toughest problems'.

To give you an idea of the scale competitors are encouraged to think in, the competition provides references and resources including the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Ideally, students' proposals will be more than theoretical – and will actually be implemented to help with hunger relief, poverty reduction, education, disease control, healthcare, the environment and other critical problems facing our world.

According to John Ridge, executive director of the ACS Foundation, past winners in the competition have gone on to excel in their studies and secure vital roles in the ICT industry.

"We have a proud history of promoting the real life benefits of applied technology, and encouraging students to consider a career in technology," Ridge said.

"The Imagine Cup is a fantastic platform for IT students to demonstrate the practical application of their skills and creativity."

Microsoft's director of developer and platform evangelism, Gianpaolo Carraro, said the Imagine Cup encourages students to incubate their ideas into services and products that have real world application.

"It's one thing to have an idea and win a competition; it's another thing all together to translate that idea into something that can have a real and lasting impact on people's lives," Carraro said.

"We want to help students take the next logical step by providing them links into industry and giving them professional mentoring."

Designed to represent the breadth of the ICT industry, the Imagine Cup includes a number of competition categories. The Australian finals of the 2011 Imagine Cup Software Design category will be held in May before a live panel of judges.

The winning team from the 2011 Imagine Cup will then be invited to represent Australia in the worldwide finals held in New York in July.

For more information and to read about the winners, visit www.microsoft.com/australia/imaginecup. ■