



## Olympian's swim school gets gong

BRIONY SNEDDEN

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He took the swimming world by storm as an athlete, and now Justin Norris is making a splash in the business arena.

The Justin Norris Swim Academy at Thornton was named Business of the Year at the Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards on Friday, three years after the Olympic medalist dove into the enterprise.

And there are already plans to expand, with Rutherford and Newcastle mooted as potential locations for branches of the academy.

The Thornton centre runs about 800 swimming lessons each week, as well as offering hydrotherapy and aqua aerobics.

While the business is a perfect marriage of Mr Norris' passion for swimming and a career out of the pool, he said there were definite similarities between top-level sport and running a business.

"It's really similar to swimming in that you get to a point and you have to go back to the drawing board and start again," he said yesterday.

"I've been learning from the lessons in international swimming and applying those to the business."

And tests such as the Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards could be akin to Olympic competition.

As well as the Business of the Year, surveyor Christine Jones was also a major award winner, named Business Woman of the Year.

"I think that from my experience in competitive swimming, unless you test yourself you don't know where you can improve," Mr Norris said.

To keep improving is something the soon-to-be father-of-three takes seriously.

There are plans to open more branches of the academy in line with Mr Norris' ambition to be internationally credited as one of the best learn to swim programs.

"We're looking at Rutherford in the short to medium term, and even towards Newcastle possibly in Kotara," he said of potential locations.

"I have seen a lot of different programs around Australia and the world - and we won't stop until we become one of the best programs in the world."

MAKING WAVES: Justin Norris (right) is presented with his Business of the Year award by Ray O'Brien of Companion Credit Union. 120908SS40