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Language college wins Entrepreneur of the Year

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ROD Jones, founder and managing director of education services provider Navitas, was last night named the 2008 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year.

The West Australian-based entrepreneur took the title ahead of 24 other regional winners from around Australia at a dinner in Sydney.

Jones founded the innovative education business in the mid-1990s, establishing private colleges on university campuses to provide English language tuition and transition support for international students.

Today, Navitas is the largest provider in Australia of university pathway education, teaching more than 12,000 students on campuses at 10 universities around the country. It is also the largest provider of English language programs to international students, teaching about 16,000 students each year.

Jones has also taken the concept globally, establishing colleges on university campuses in Sri Lanka, Kenya, Zambia, Canada, Britain and Indonesia. Through a contract with the Australian Government, Navitas also provides English language and cultural adjustment programs to about 25 per cent of all new migrants coming to Australia.

Jack Cowin, chairman of the 11-person national judging panel, said Jones's leadership and entrepreneurial spirit, together with the innovative model, had positioned Navitas as a substantial and highly valuable international provider of education services.

Winners in other categories were Torsten Ketelsen of GMA Garnet Group, Mark Newbold of Strategic Marine, Karen Cariss of PageUp People and Adam Garone of The Movember Foundation.

Jones will now go to Monte Carlo in May, along with entrepreneurs from more than 50 other countries, to represent Australia at the 2009 World Entrepreneur Of The Year.

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