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Our world champion speaks out

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Mark Hunter, principal of Undurba State School, north of Brisbane, has been officially dubbed the world's best public speaker.

Mr Hunter won the prestigious title at the 2009 Toastmasters International Speech Contest in Connecticut, United States, earlier this month.

The keen public speaker said he felt privileged and an immense sense of achievement after his win which had been more than a dozen years in the making.

'The goal of becoming world champion of public speaking is something I have been working on for 13 years,' Mr Hunter said.

'I first competed in 1996 in St Louis, competing four subsequent times before winning this year.'

Mr Hunter, who has spent 36 years in a wheelchair since a water-skiing accident at 22, attributed part of his win to a shift in approach to public speaking that focused on making a difference for the audience.

'The last thing I say to myself before I go on stage is, "I will make a difference for at least one person",' he said.

'This allows me to be the best I can be for the audience who has gifted me their time.'

Mr Hunter, who dedicated his win to his late mother, impressed the judges and the 1500-strong audience with a speech on his personal struggles and how he'd found a unique way of approaching life and making a difference.

With messages of support still flowing in from past and current students and colleagues, Mr Hunter is turning his sights to the future but this time a little closer to home.

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First class ... Undurba State School principal Mark Hunter accepts his World Champion of Public Speaking trophy at the Toastmasters International Speech Contest.

'As world champion I can never compete again in the Toastmasters world championships,' he said.

'But I have my own business which provides training in coaching and the delivery of speeches, and I aim to develop this part of my professional life.'

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