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Editorial

The past four months have realised a number of very important changes for the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA). The accreditation service has been launched allowing, for the first time, tutors in Australia to have a minimum standard of education. Members should visit www.accreditedtutor.org

The ATA has a new website which has been developed PixelBlitz. The website has been widely acclaimed by members. The new website gives the members added value through an enhanced search capability. It also is designed to enable prospective members, parents and policy-makers to readily access information to make informed decisions. Of course, with a new design such as this, the metrics available are excellent. Once fully operational, a wide range of ATA KPIs will be available for members.

On account of a very generous donation by Chin Chan (i-Smart Tuition Centre) and a pledge to give further development funds, the ATA is currently developing the Private Enterprise Tutoring Scholarship (PETS) scheme. This scheme will provide private tutoring scholarships for students in need of numeracy and/or literacy education as identified by national tests. The detail about this scheme and its present activities can be read about below.

The ATA has created a new alliance with AON who replaces AAMI. We also have a new alliance with PixelBlitz. The printing deal is under review and another alliance is currently being negotiated.

The level of media coverage so far this year, in terms of pure numbers, has been unprecedented. Two press releases with the ATA and Fair Trading Minister Stuart Ayres, targeting the Indian and Chinese communities, have placed the ATA and its members in extremely favourable light in terms of these cultural groups.

ATA to set up a charity

The ATA Board has realised that hundreds of thousands of Australian children miss out on an education that helps them to meet even basic literacy and numeracy standards. As a proactive and responsible peak body the ATA is seeking charitable status in

order to set up a fund for children to get targeted tutoring support.

This will probably require a minor adjustment to the ATA Constitution such that it satisfies the needs of a charitable body, in addition to its present not-for-profit status.

Insurance Partnership with AON

AON, the global insurer well known for its sponsorship of Manchester United, is offering an insurance deal for ATA members that is an improvement on the deal with the former insurer. AON approached the ATA with an offer better than that given by AAMI. Apart from being cheaper, the product offered by AON is far more robust. AAMI could not match the product. AON also offer the ATA \$7 per policy taken out – AAMI were not prepared to give the ATA any return in support of their business.

It is important for members to understand the difference between the insurance policies.

AON offers professional indemnity within the policy – AAMI do not. AON offers a dedicated product and is focused on the insured in the event of a claim. The AAMI offer was simply an ‘add-on’ to its BizPack. The AAMI product is NOT a dedicated product. AON also are the insurers for Volunteers Australia and many other member-based groups. AON also gives a return to the not-for-profit peak body, unlike AAMI, which was happy to take the policies but not to give even a small return to the ATA.

Members would be strongly advised to shift their insurance to AON, supporting the insurer that supports the ATA.

Scholarship donation from Chin Chan (iSmart Tuition Centre) and Scholarship trial



Mr Chin Chan, the founding donor of the ATA Scholarship Trial with ATA CEO Mohan Dhall

The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd. is proud to announce the start of a new phase in Australian education. A scheme to support children with literacy and numeracy disadvantages is about to commence. Funded by Mr Chan proprietor of i-Smart Tuition Centre, Burwood, the scholarships will assist students with identified learning needs.

“For children with learning needs it is necessary to shape the tutoring to meet their specific needs. A lot of families cannot afford tutoring. Often learning difficulties can be associated with financial disadvantage”, Mr Chan said.

Shortly following the 2013 ATA AGM Mr Chan offered to support the commencement of the world first private tutoring scholarship scheme. The offer came after it had been revealed that despite increased investment into schools Australia’s PISA rankings had fallen. The main issue was identified as an increase in the number of disadvantaged children falling behind. NAPLAN and other tests have revealed that something more is required.

“We are extremely happy to receive the very generous offer from Mr Chan”, ATA CEO Mohan Dhall said. “It is only through the generosity of people such as Mr Chan that such schemes can commence”.

The purpose is two-fold: to gain the attention of the broader community about the need for a new way of addressing literacy and numeracy disadvantage. The other, more important purpose is to allow for the scheme to properly be trialled prior to a launch at the beginning of 2015.

About the ATA private Scholarship Trial

The trial involves parents contacting the ATA who will place potential candidates on the Scholarship database. Students chosen for the trial will have a paid psychometric assessment done. This will then be used to inform the literacy or numeracy intervention. One child has already been chosen and will commence in early April. The funding will cover the cost of the assessment, pre and post-tests and thirty one-to-one tutoring sessions. It is expected that all tutors involved will work closely with the student 'school and family to best support the child's learning.

Accreditation

The tutor accreditation, run by our accreditation partner, Accredited Tutor, is starting to gain traction, with around 200 tutors having been accredited by the end of March 2014.

Accreditation is necessary in responsible and enlightened self-regulation. Accreditation helps to ensure a consistent and universal training standard. This is important in any industry that takes itself seriously. It also vests confidence in the industry by the people most affected by the industry – the parents and children, as well as mainstream educators.

A consistent and universal training standard that is not based on the individual training standard of any particular organisation is important. This is because every business will assert its own training is of a requisite standard. However, from an educational perspective – the appropriate perspective with respect to private tutoring – the assertion by businesses that their training standards are appropriate cannot be free of an element of either commercial interest or tinged by self-interest. The assertion can only be verified with respect to an external-to-the-business standard.

Over time it is hoped that the Certificate of Tuition will become a part of the national certification framework so that ATA businesses that are Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) can then have their own internal training models aligned to the national standard or credit given for some units of the training.

The accreditation of tutors allows for the creation of a framework for Continuing Professional Development, whereby annually accredited tutors can do some training to keep their skills current and to maintain industry, and in this case global, best practice. Such a framework is important for the purposes of ensuring that tutors are upholding professional standards. Moreover, over time training units can address emerging trends and issues within the industry – including the growing awareness of learning difficulties and the varied forms of instruction that can be used, including those that use emerging technologies.

From a regulatory point-of-view, an industry that establishes accreditation standards actually helps ameliorate the possibility of the government imposing a regulatory regime that establishes national standards. Thus, even from a purely selfish vantage, businesses should embrace the accreditation as means of asserting to regulators that the industry is characterised by responsible, professional tutors and practitioners.

Non-English speaking families warned about deceptive practices by: Karen Keast

Unscrupulous tutoring providers are targeting vulnerable non-English speaking families with deceptive practices and high-pressure selling techniques. A NSW Fair Trading and Australian Tutoring Association awareness campaign, urging families to get smart on tutoring products, has prompted a flood of complaints about tutoring services.

ATA CEO Mohan Dhall says many families, particularly those from Chinese communities, have reported they were “ripped off and misled” by tutoring providers.

“We have had quite a lot of calls. It’s quite disconcerting,” he says. “It’s sad to hear that our suspicions of people, within an industry, being rorted have actually been borne out.”

The awareness campaign, launched to coincide with the start of the school year, aimed to alert parents and students, particularly in the Chinese and Indian communities, about the potential pitfalls of signing up for tutoring products and services. Mr Dhall says these communities, and also the Korean and Vietnamese communities, are particularly vulnerable.

He says families with non-English speaking backgrounds place a high emphasis on education and are increasingly turning to tutoring products and services to help their children excel in the Australian school system.

Complaints

In New South Wales alone last year, Fair Trading received 18 complaints related to tutoring. A Fair Trading spokesperson says nine complaints related to refunds, four to the quality of service or product provided, one complaint related to the contract, and there were two complaints for cancellation and

two for pricing.

“While this is not a large figure, disputes involving tutors and tutoring products can be costly,” Fair Trading Minister Stuart Ayres explains. “In families with non-English speaking backgrounds, tutoring products can be in high demand, yet it is often non-English speaking communities that are most reluctant to lodge formal complaints with consumer protection agencies when things go wrong.”

Misleading representation

Mr Dhall says many of the complaints to the ATA focused on misleading representations. “I think it could be classified arguably as misleading advertising where they use things like testimonials which can’t be verified,” he says. “They’ll say – 90 per cent of our kids are going to a particular school or university...and no-one can verify these things.”

Under Australian Consumer Law, tutoring businesses are required to substantiate any claims they make on websites, in advertisements or verbally. Companies found to be engaged in false and misleading representations face fines of up to \$1.1 million while individuals face fines of up to \$220,000.

“Testimonials must be genuine and Fair Trading will issue substantiation notices to any tutoring business believed to be using fake customer testimonials or making unrealistic guarantees of academic success,” Mr Ayres states.

Door-to-door sales

Parents are also being urged to be wary of tutoring businesses selling products door-to-door. “The door-to-door sales aspect of tutoring in Australia is mainly people who sell computer disks,” Mr Dhall says. “Usually these are programs written in South Africa, usually it’s a particular type of selling

that is accompanied by high pressure and so-called assessments made by someone who isn't qualified to assess...They will then say a child needs tutoring and give you a few disks, which cost about \$20 to make but for which \$6000-plus is levied, included in which is an element of interest of around 24 per cent."

Fair Trading states door-to-door businesses are prohibited from taking any payments within a 10-day cooling-off period and must also follow termination requirements. Under law, fines of up to \$50,000 for a company, and \$10,000 for an individual, apply to those who fail to observe the cooling-off provision. Consumers should also be fully informed about cancellation and refund conditions, and the total cost of services, before signing contracts.

Advice

Mr Dhall says reputable tutoring providers are accredited tutors and members of the ATA. Under the ATA's code of conduct, members must have a refund policy, fully disclose staff qualifications, accurately report on students' progress and have a written grievance procedure for disputes.

"Parents do need an education as to what they should expect, and they should ask questions," he advises.

Source: <https://accreditedtutor.org/non-english-speaking-families-warned-about-deceptive-practices/>

ATA In the News

The ATA has had unprecedented media coverage so far this year. Both the NSW Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Education and Communities endorsed the activities of the peak body. Two press releases have been issued with Stuart Ayres Minister for Fair Trading. These media releases have been widely disseminated within targeted communities – the Chinese and Indian communities. The purpose

of this joint approach has been for people in communities where there is a high utility for private supplementary tutoring to understand their right. Typically in such communities parents do not know, or do not exercise their rights. Education for parents is therefore important.

Examples of the media can be seen below.

Parents warned against unscrupulous tutors

Parents and students are being warned of fraudulent tutors after two north shore families were stung by unscrupulous operators.

Last November, a student in Artarmon paid a tutor \$600, only for the tutor to be largely uncontactable after numerous attempts to schedule a tutorial session. After involvement from the Department of Fair Trading, the tutor indicated they would refund the money, according to a department spokeswoman. In the other case, a North Sydney customer paid \$250, with the tutor indicating she would not provide a refund.

They were two of 18 complaints lodged with the department last year involving the tutoring industry. It has prompted a warning from Fair Trading Minister Stuart Ayres and the Australian Tutoring Association president Mohan Dhall. Mr Dhall said parents should choose tutors who are accredited with the association, which includes background police checks.

NORTH SHORE TIMES 19.02.2014 from

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/north-shore/parents-warned-against-unscrupulous-tutors/story-fngr8h9d-1226831592660>

Facts about tutors

At a glance

- Discuss your child's education with their teacher first.
- Tutors need to add confidence and work in partnership with your child's school.
- Tutors should be warm, empathetic and subject matter experts.
- Tutors should build confidence in your child so that they trust their own skills.
- Exercise caution if you're asked to sign contracts with a tutor.

Private tutoring to give kids a helping hand in their schooling is a growing business. However, it's also an area where parents can be vulnerable to bogus offers and misleading advertising. If you're considering using a tutor, you need to know how to get the best service for you and your child.

It's important to know that the job of a school is to ensure your child's educational needs are met in line with the curriculum. Teachers in NSW public schools are university educated and use effective teaching and learning techniques. If you have concerns about your child's education, you should discuss it with your child's teacher, year adviser or principal.



Qualities of a good tutor

Mohan Dhall, chief executive officer of the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA), says the right tutor can complement school education when “they instil confidence in the student and work in partnership with schools”.

Mohan says parents should first think whether their child would benefit from tuition. After all, a well-structured home environment may provide the best framework for parents to help their children.

However, if you have identified an area or areas that could benefit from extra academic attention, then you need to be clear about what you want the tuition to achieve, Mohan says. A well-structured home environment may provide the best framework for parents to help their children.

“They should also see how the tuition can work best with the child's school to achieve the best outcomes for the child.”

Tutors should be effective communicators, warm and empathetic, and open, honest and accountable, Mohan says. They will be subject matter experts who can break down complex concepts and build understanding through standard teaching processes. A tutor's aim is to help kids build confidence in their skills so they can help themselves.

Tutors in Australia can now be accredited by an industry-based certification endorsed by the Australian Tutoring Association. As more tutors apply for accreditation, you'll be able to search for them by subject and suburb at www.accreditedtutor.org

What to ask a potential tutor

- How long has the tutoring service been in business?
- Does the service belong to a relevant industry association with an enforceable code of conduct?
- Does the tutor have references from other parents who have used the service?
- Has the tutor been interviewed face-to-face by the tutoring service?
- What qualifications and experience does the tutor have?
- What training does the tutor have in the subject area being tutored?
- Is the tutor equipped to give correct support in NSW curriculum requirements?
- Have reference checks been conducted on the tutor?
- Has the tutor undergone relevant child protection screenings?

What to look out for in tutors

Unfortunately, not all tutors have positive traits. Many families have contacted the NSW Fair Trading complaining about tutoring services related to refunds, cancellations, fees and unsatisfactory service.

In hiring a tutor, NSW Fair Trading advises parents to:

- exercise caution with overseas or interstate institutions promoting their services on the internet
- read any contracts carefully before signing
- be aware of any cancellation conditions.

NSW Fair Trading also suggests that parents ask how guarantees of success can be proved and to be careful of companies that rely on web-based communication and don't offer telephone numbers or office locations.

Parents who are experiencing problems with tutoring services can contact NSW Fair Trading on 13 32 20. The Australian Tutoring Association has 6,000 registered tutors nationally who abide by a Code of Conduct. Fact sheets on hiring a tutor are available in Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean and Vietnamese.

Source:

<http://www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/homework-and-study/homework-tips/facts-about-tutors>

Open letter to ATA Members: AON Insurance

Dear ATA Members,

As we are always keen to improve the benefits we offer you, I am delighted to announce our recent partnership with leading insurance broker, Aon Risk Solutions. Aon is a specialist in servicing the insurance needs of the education sector, having assisted private schools and universities through to registered training officers with their insurance requirements. We're therefore pleased that we can have such an experienced insurer on board.

The new insurance offering has been specifically tailored for our industry. We have worked hard to ensure that the policy is comprehensive; covering professional indemnity, public liability & products liability with optional business insurance and it is suitable for everyone from a teacher, to a tutor and tutoring business. Your insurance premiums are also competitively priced with savings of up to 10% on our previous available policy, making it a great deal all round!

Aon is also committed to providing excellent service. Aon has an affinity for supporting small businesses, currently insuring over 100,000 in Australia. In an ongoing Aon Customer Satisfaction survey, their clients have rated Aon 93% for service & 97% for cover*, illustrating Aon understands their markets.

If you are interested in finding out more, please call 1800 020 339 or visit their website where you can apply online for the cover.

We encourage you to consider Aon's tutoring insurance for yourself or your business as the ATA continue to strengthen our relationship with them.

Best regards,

ATA CEO,

Mohan Dhall

You can also follow Aon on Facebook @ AonSmallBusiness

* score based on 4098 responses, live survey results conducted by an independent research company and accurate as of 11/02/2014

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