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Feature

Taking guesswork out of tutors

A new initiative helps parents find a top trainer, writes **Stephen Lacey**.

Most people looking for tutoring work resort to pinning up an advertisement on the noticeboard outside the local cafe, or in the local newspaper. Of course, the problem for parents looking to enlist your services is they don't really know what they are getting for their money. But this is all set to change with the launch of a new accreditation system.

The system is the result of a partnership between the peak industry body, the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA), and accreditedtutor.org. Not only does the accreditation enable tutors to ask more for their services, it is the only service in Australia that allows parents to search for an accredited tutor, with police checks and tertiary qualifications that have been independently verified.

According to government figures, there are 34,000 tutors Australia-wide. However, the ATA believes the actual figure is closer to 75,000. Although the new accreditation system has just been launched, 200 tutors have already signed up. "It would be expected that these tutors could advertise that they are accredited and therefore ask a higher fee; that would be appropriate," says the chief executive of the ATA, Mohan Dhall. "Consumers, of course, feel that they are getting a better standard of tutor with a better layer of protection. So everyone's a winner."

Dhall says a qualified school

teacher can expect to earn anything from \$45 an hour up to more than \$100 an hour for tutoring work.

A non-teacher trained tutor will earn from under \$20 an hour through to \$60 an hour, depending on their industry experience. About 20 per cent of tutors work full-time in the role as professionals. For the vast majority, tutoring is a handy second income.

The peak starting age for children to enlist a tutor is 10 years old. "This is when most families opt to get tutoring for their children," says Dhall. "The other peak occurs in years 10 and 11 at high school, when parents are preparing their children for their final exams."

Kate Gurjian, from Rydalmere, NSW, is a former primary school and middle-school teacher and principal. After having two children of her own, she took a break from the classroom and has taken up tutoring from home and online.

"I love it; I can do it my way and in my own time," she says.

Gurjian tutors primary students in English and maths. She also teaches secondary students up to year 9 in English, and she assists with editing tertiary English

assignments online. The children turn up at her house from 3.30pm until 6pm. She charges \$95 an hour, making her one of the most expensive tutors in NSW. "But I'm also one of the most experienced.

"There are a lot who are offering tutoring at \$15 to \$20 an hour, but they aren't qualified teachers. You get what you pay for. The work that I do in preparation for the session, and the work I do afterwards is more than just that hour. That needs to be weighed up against the cheaper services."

Gurjian signed up for the new

accreditation system in January this year and hopes it will live up to its promise. "We'll just have to wait and see," she says.