



PRESS RELEASE:

Complaints low – but parents need to ask the right questions.

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Good news for users of tuition services: complaints to the NSW Office of Fair Trading are still very low. “Only 12 recorded complaints in a billion dollar industry is very small”, Mr Dhall said. “

The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) has experienced a very large upsurge in membership over the past year suggesting that self-regulation has been very effective. This upsurge has seen membership swell to over 430 businesses and individuals, an increase in membership of over 20%.

Mohan Dhall, ATA CEO said, “The news of the small number of complaints has been very encouraging. As the peak body for tutors we take consumer protection very seriously.” He noted that tuition businesses were more aware of their responsibilities particularly to vulnerable consumers.

However, despite the good news, there were a couple of areas that consumers still need to be more vigilant. This is particularly the case with respect to businesses offering tuition online or promoting the sales of computer software by using high pressure selling tactics. “Consumers need to check the claims made by ‘educational assessors’ who may be salespersons with no educational training”, Mr Dhall said. “We have had a number of complaints from consumers alleging that businesses that sell some computer-based software are using high pressure tactics to close a sale and then find themselves locked into lengthy contracts worth many thousands of dollars. Parents need to ask themselves whether have an element of face-to-face personalised tuition should supplement these types of programs.

Some of the questions that parents should ask prospective tutors are:

- **Are you a member of the ATA?**
- What is the background of the tutor(s) - what qualifications and experience do they have?
- What is the refund policy?

In respect of computer-based materials:

- Who wrote them and from which country do they originate?
- What is the total cost?
- What will happen if my child does not improve as a result of their use of the materials

Checking that the tutor you use is a member of the ATA is an important step as members are accountable to the ATA Code of Conduct. The ATA also provides relief by way of dispute resolution processes. The rapid growth in private tuition, and its increasing support of mainstream education, has meant that parents are increasingly turning to tutors for support.

ATA Media contacts:

Mohan Dhall (ATA CEO)
Storm McGrath

(02) 9704 5724
(02) 4929 6711

or 0408 619 714
or 0419 295 637