

Too few tutors on books

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PARENTS are being warned that educational tutors do not need police checks, accreditation or any qualifications to work with their children.

The Australian Tutoring Association is urging the State Government to better protect parents because a lack of regulation leaves families at risk of hiring dodgy operators.

Association chief executive Mohan Dhall said parents were vulnerable because once they decided their child needed help, they often made quick decisions and were less choosy.

``Parents need to take time to ask more questions because, on the basis of a resume, you could think you have found the right person for the job but some people claim expertise in areas they have little knowledge," he said. ``There's no system in place for making sure people who are working for themselves as a tutor or coach have police checks . . . so it always remains a possibility there could be problems."

Mr Dhall called for greater regulation of the industry.

He said at a minimum, the State Government should advise parents to hire tutors who were members of the association because it ensured there were standards among members.

``The most important thing our membership offers to consumers is truth in advertising, duty to disclose honestly . . . and a refund policy," he said.

In South Australia, only about nine operators were members of the association but elsewhere in the country about one in five were members.

SA Association of School Parent Clubs president Jenice Zerna said parents wanted stricter regulations for tutors.

``They should have some qualification . . . and they should definitely have to have police checks," she said.

``If they don't, they should not be allowed to work with children.

``Considering what has gone on in this state, the safety of children is of utmost importance."

A spokesman for the **Attorney-General's** Department said only one complaint about a tutor was recorded last calendar year, and that was over billing for unauthorised lessons.

``CBS (Consumer and Business Services) is not aware of any specific codes or regulations that relate to tutoring services," the spokesman said. ``However, Australian consumer law guarantees your rights when you buy goods and services. Parents should think carefully before signing up and/or paying for any tutoring service, no matter how good it sounds.

``Asking questions about the service is a good way to help you decide if it is the right service for your child."

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