

[ [Previous](#) ] [ [Education 2](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

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## Tutoring industry seeks parent input

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Tutoring industry seeks parent input **BOOKED UP:** Tutored student Kalan O'Neill, 20, of Theodore, left, and ACT Literacy Tutoring director and diagnostician Karen England. Photos: KARLEEN MINNEY INTENT: Tom Peel, left, Tom Chester, both 12 and of Calwell, Amelie Shannon, 8, of Ainslie, and Kalan O'Neill take advantage of tutoring in addition to regular schooling. By Breanna Tucker Schools Reporter Parents are being encouraged to demand a better tutoring system for their children under a new survey designed to expose the pros and cons of the industry.

The Australian Tutoring Association believes the sector is undervalued and is keen to discover how behind-the-scenes **teachers** can be recognised for the vital role they play in educating Australian kids. Chief executive Mohan Dahall said the survey results could revolutionise the industry by revealing the need for new measures such as financial compensation for parents, minimum qualification standards and even the formal introduction of tutors into schools. "Across Australia there is a general lack of awareness about the role of tuition in respect to mainstream education and a poor understanding of how parents do it," he said.

"It seems the private sector operates on its own, the mainstream sector operates independently and the two never meet. "Why not see if we can make that happen?" The survey asks parents about different forms of tuition their children undertake, costs, accessibility and barriers to attaining positive outcomes for their kids. ACT Literacy Tutoring director and diagnostician Karen England yesterday welcomed the survey and called for the introduction of specialised tutors into classrooms.

She has completed numerous degrees, courses and workshops in languages, education, linguistics, neurology and domestic violence, but is concerned not all tutors are quite so qualified. "I think people who don't have qualifications shouldn't be tutoring," she said. "It's OK if you have a university student helping out people who are only slightly down on their marks but when you have the bottom 30 per cent of the class unable to read or spell, it is a highly specialised area.'

' Ms England said children who struggled severely with reading, writing and numeracy often had more serious conditions such as dyslexia, autism, Aspergers and ADHD. She said specialised **teachers** needed to be introduced to classrooms to help **students** whose brains were wired differently to the majority of their peers. "It should be every child's right to be educated and if the government can't do it they need to [invest the money to] help others take it on," she said.

Others are concerned the need for qualifications will stunt the industry. Kumon Education Centre (Tuggeranong) supervisor Jane Hyatt is worried it may push up prices and dissuade suitably educated, able citizens from

providing a community service. Meanwhile, parents seem delighted at the prospect of a new system.

Ainslie's Melissa Shannon pays \$650 a term to send her daughter, Amelie, 8, to tutoring at ACT Literacy Tutoring and says the cost is "stretching us to the limit". She wanted to see the introduction of a tax rebate system as well as improved communication between the public and private sector. Theodore's Kalan O'Neill, 20, would like to see a more structured system highlighting qualifications after his family searched seven years to find a decent tutor.

"I was getting severe migraines that took me out of school for a week at a time and even the doctors couldn't figure out what it was," he said. "I went through more than 10 tutors before I was diagnosed with dyslexia [at ACT Literacy Tutoring]. "I went from a Grade 6 level spelling to Grade 11 in six months but it took us a long time to find the right service."

' The parent survey is available online at [www.ata.edu.au](http://www.ata.edu.au). Results will be published in September.

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[\[ Previous \]](#) [\[ Education 2 \]](#) [\[ Next \]](#)

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