Changing the limits

SOME speed zones will increase and others will decrease in a move aimed to streamline legal driving.

A review of 12 key NSW roads where speed limits changed frequently has recommended changes to 11 of them, Roads Minister Duncan Gay said yesterday.

Under the RTA audit, speed limits have been increased in four zones, decreased in seven and one has remained unchanged.

"This is about making our roads safer, it's about allowing people to be watching the road rather than watching road signs," Mr Gay said.

Dead fish near spill

TWO large dead fish have been found near the Orica chemical spill, leading to calls for marine life in the area to be tested.

Premier Barry O'Farrell is refusing to extend an inquiry into an initial spill of hexavalent chromium from the Kooragang Island plant to include the spill of arsenic into the Hunter River on Friday.

"The government should extend the inquiry to look at Orica's release of arsenic into the Hunter River on Friday afternoon. We now have dead fish washing on to the shore at Stockton," opposition spokesman Luke Foley said.

NAB link shut down

SOME city shoppers were unable to access their cash after National Australia Bank's online services were shut down for several hours yesterday afternoon.

A NAB spokeswoman said the technical fault affected "some ATMs, EFTPOS facilities and online banking" from 3.15pm, but she did not confirm how widespread the disruptions were.

It is understood terminals in Sydney's CBD, Kings Cross, Potts Point and Bondi Junction were affected.

Services were fully restored by 5.45pm.

Home lessons see rise of mock tutors

Homework: Tutor Renata Maddrell helps 10-year-old Bianca Scully with her mathematics yesterday

Picture: Adam Ward

Jenny Dillon

PARENTS are spending up to $6 billion a year on private tutoring, with the industry growing by almost 40 per cent over the past five years.

But only half of that money goes to the official industry, where there is quality control, a code of ethics and a refund policy, according to the executive officer of the Australian Tutoring Association Mohan Dhall.

About half of all private tutors have other full-time occupations. The vast majority of these are teachers who take in pupils after school hours, while others are university students, university tutors or people who work in other industries who run after-hours classes through community colleges, he said.

Government figures revealed that this year there were 36,000 people who nominated private tutoring as their full-time job.

But there were another 40,000 tutors who had other full-time jobs, said Mr Dhall, bringing the total number of private tutors to 76,000.

With no accreditation or qualification required, anyone can set themselves up as a tutor, Mr Dhall said.

He is calling for regulation of the industry to ensure that parents get quality and value for their money.

Some teachers are able to charge up to $200 an hour for face-to-face, one-on-one tuition, while university students with only basic expertise can charge as little as $20 an hour. Mr Dhall said wages contributed only 30 to 35 per cent of the annual expenses of the tuition business.

The other expenses were related to everyday business operations such as rent, administration, utilities, advertising and materials.

"The annual spend on wages for those who call themselves tutors is more than $827 million," said Mr Dhall. "Total added value (of the official industry) would be about $3 billion," he said.

Taking other tutors into account would double the bill to about $5.5 billion to $6 billion, he said.

According to interim results of a survey being conducted by the Australian Tutoring Industry, almost 60 per cent of parents are paying more than $51 per child per week for private tutoring, with some paying as much as $200 a week.

Face-to-face, one-on-one tuition was the most popular method, with 42.5 per cent of parents preferring this option.

The least popular was online tutoring, with less than 2 per cent of parents opting for this method.

About 65 per cent of parents listed a tax deduction for private tutoring as a priority.

What you need to know: Deal ends AEST midnight 24 August 2011. Offer applies to return adult economy class airfares including Seat, Seat+Bag, The Works and Works Deluxe, booked from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Adelaide, or Cairns to New Zealand on any direct service. Offer applies to airfares on Air New Zealand services only. To obtain the $150 off discount per adult, book online at www.airnewzealand.com.au and enter the promo code NZ150 into the promo code box for flights to New Zealand from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Adelaide or Cairns for travel during 05 Sep 11 and 19 Dec 11. Enter Promo code NZ150OFF into the promo code box for flights to New Zealand from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Adelaide and Cairns for travel during 19 Jan 12 and 30 Jun 12. Promo code must not be used in conjunction with any other airfare related promo code. Final discount will be shown on the summary page of your booking. Offer valid for new bookings only. For credit or other card payments a fee of AU$6 per person, per one way journey applies. Return government and airport charges may vary. A non-refundable service fee of $20 per person, per one-way journey applies to Contact Centre bookings. Offer correct as at 20 August 11. Seats are limited and may not be available on all flights. Cancellation/change fees: Air New Zealand conditions of carriage, Air New Zealand terms & conditions apply, visit airnewzealand.com.au for full details.
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