



# Within Tuition

Australian Tutoring  
Association (ATA) Ltd.

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## The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd Newsletter

### Time for a fair go for those most in need

The Rudd Labor government has made it clear that education is a priority in line with labor social policy and values. The notion of an 'Education Revolution' has been used as an overarching statement of intent: for a government intent on boosting inclusion for the least advantaged, or most disadvantaged, of all students. The cornerstone of the proposed 'Revolution' is technology - access to lap tops and modern computers, the use of software and ICTs are the centrepiece of the 'Revolution'.

This aspect of the 'Revolution', this focus on computers and computer-related technologies has even translated to the Education Tax Rebate (ETR). The ETR allows students and their families to deduct \$700 worth of expenses that have been spent on 'allowable deductions'. Included in the list of allowable deductions is educational software.

Despite personal representations to the Minister's office by an ATA delegation, the eligibility criteria for the ETR specifically excludes tuition. It does however include educational software, some of which is sold at \$5,000 or more, in some cases with finance thrown in for an added 24% per annum. It is arguable whether a student benefits from the use of educational software in the absence of some personalised support. It is plausible that educational software alone, however well written, out-sources the learning to the student. This means that unless the student is highly motivated, the software absolutely and directly relevant to the mainstream class and State-based syllabi and is written in such a way as to enable mastery learning, then it is highly likely to be a waste of money. Educational software that includes some personalised support is more likely to be effective.

The recent 'An Even Start' program offered up to \$700 to students who had been identified as not meeting national benchmarks in either literacy or numeracy. The government will have at its disposal tangible evidence of the benefit of face-to-face tuition. This is because the students who were tutored under the program had to complete a pre-test and post-test. If, as expected, the

difference between pre- and post-test results demonstrates improvement in student outcomes and learning then the government's emphasis on computers and technology to the exclusion of face-to-face tuition will be indefensible.

In market economies the commercial sector provides that which the market seeks. There has been steady growth in the tuition sector annually. This trend over time indicates that families are prepared to supplement school-based education with extra curricular educational programs; that families are taking ownership of educational outcomes.

Commercial tutoring enterprises are driven by twin pressures: bottom lines and delivery of a quality educational service. A strong reputation for excellence is essential in an industry where competition is very strong. Parents will not spend discretionary dollars on supplementary programs that are ineffective. Thus, tutors are under pressure to both innovate and add value to student outcomes through finding ways of teaching and instruction that are effective. In this context it is difficult to understand the government's marginalisation of tuition under the ETR eligibility guidelines. On the one hand tutoring has been used to support the students most in need under the An Even Start program. At the same time the government expressly excludes tuition from tax deductibility - sending, in fact, a very contrary message to families and the industry.

If the government is serious about raising literacy and numeracy levels for students in need then it will make tuition tax deductible. At the very least \$700 annually could be given to families to spend on literacy or numeracy programs for students most in need - those not meeting national benchmarks. Tutors who are prepared to be accountable to key stakeholder groups - government, parents, unions and others - and who will work in partnership with mainstream schools are the kind of tutors the government can utilise to raise educational standards. That will not happen when tutors are substituted for more expensive, and often less effective, capital.

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## The disciplining and suspension of an ATA member by Mohan Dhall

This month the ATA Code Administration Committee (CAC) met to decide a matter in regards to a member of the ATA. A complaint had been passed to the ATA by a member of the public in regards to serious violation of a particular Code of Conduct clause. When the ATA receives a complaint about a member it is bound to follow the Code of Conduct itself in the administration and resolution of the complaint.

### ATA Complaints Resolution Procedure

44. A Member will make every reasonable effort to fairly and quickly resolve any complaint made by a client.

45. Where an oral complaint is made to a Member the person receiving the complaint will:

- (a) identify himself/herself, listen, record details and determine what the complainant wants;
- (b) confirm the details received;
- (c) explain the complaints resolution procedure, and advise of alternative courses of action;
- (d) resolve the complaint immediately if possible or make a commitment to resolve the complaint within a given time frame; and
- (e) follow up the complaint as appropriate e.g provide the complainant with feedback regarding the result of any action taken by the Member to resolve the complaint.

46. Where a written complaint is made the Member will:

- (a) provide the complainant with written feedback within ten (10) days of receiving the complaint regarding the result of action taken by the Member to resolve the complaint; and
- (b) if it is not possible to resolve the complaint within ten (10) days, provide written acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint within seven (7) days and specify the time frame within which the complainant will receive feedback regarding the result of action taken by the Member to resolve the complaint.

47. The Member will ensure that all staff are familiar with the Member's complaints resolution policies.

48. Where a complaint cannot be resolved between the Member and the client, the Member must advise the client of the client's right to refer the complaint to the ATA. Either party can refer the complaint to the ATA.

49. Where a complaint is referred to the ATA, the Board via its Code Administration Committee (CAC) will, as soon as practicable after the referral, hear the complaint and notify the parties in writing of the determination.

50. Where the ATA determines that a Member has breached the Code, the ATA will apply sanctions as per the ATA Constitution.

The particular matter concerned Clause 32 of the ATA Code of Conduct:

*32. Members must ensure that interviews with tutors are conducted face to face and may involve the prospective tutors doing practice questions and answering questions related to child protection and education.*

The Member had consistently and knowingly breached this clause over along period of time. When the matter came before the CAC the following steps were taken:

1. The ATA CAC called the Member and presented the case as it was put by the complainant;
2. The Member confirmed that the complainant was correct and decided that 'commercial realities' were such that given a choice the Member would prefer to leave than abide by the Code;
3. The ATA CAC decided to accept the Member's resignation from the ATA pending such time as there would be compliance with the Code. Had the Member not offered to resign the Member would have been expelled immediately.

### Considerations by the CAC

The CAC had to consider the Code as well as the view put to the CAC by the Member. The CAC considered the role of face to face interviewing and its effect on the employment of tutors. It was felt that very few businesses would accept non-face to face means of recruitment as the preferred model, particularly so in the case of education.

The CAC unanimously decided that there was no room to compromise either the Code specifically or the ATA through varying or amending the Clause to suit businesses that may wish to utilise technology in the recruitment of staff.

When Members of any organisation choose to join that organisation often there is an overarching philosophy, vision or statement of principles that attracts the membership. All memberships require some personal discipline to be exercised for the greater good of the organisation. The ATA's founding principles were on accountable tuition. Clause 32 stems directly from the need for accountability and defensible recruitment practices. It therefore is a Clause central to the overall philosophy and aims of the ATA.

Individual Membership is not so important that a compromise to the Code can be allowed. It is adherence to the ATA Code that distinguishes ATA Members in the market. It is this quality that creates a two-tiered industry - those within the ATA and those outside of the ATA. It is this Code that gives a mechanism for dispute resolution. Furthermore, it is this Code that gives parents and students, the most important of all stakeholders in education, a sense of peace and security when choosing and ATA Member.



## Is it a childcare centre or an educational centre?

A matter of great interest recently came to the attention of the ATA Board. This involved an inquiry concerning the age at which parents can leave children in a tuition centre without parents being present. This is a very serious issue for those involved in early childhood learning. The issues areas follows:

- Tuition and educational services providers are generally not licensed childcare services providers;
- Childcare centres have certain restrictions arising from licensing that must be adhered to;
- If an educational services provider (tuition centre) does teach students under the age of 5 what are the rules in regards to children and parents?

In NSW there is no specific legislation relating to tuition providers. There is however a piece of legislation called the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW). Of particular relevance is s200 which is quoted, in part, below:

### ***Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 - SECT 200***

#### **Meaning of "children's service"**

(1) For the purposes of this Act, a "children's service" is a service that provides education or care (other than residential care), or both education and care, whether directly or indirectly, for one or more children under the age of 6 years and who do not ordinarily attend school (disregarding any children who are related to the person providing the care).

(2) However, a "children's service" does not include any of the following:

- a service provided by a designated agency,
- a babysitting, playgroup or child-minding service that is organised informally by the parents of the children concerned,
- a service provided for fewer than 5 children (disregarding any children who are related to the person providing the service) at the premises at which at least one of the children resides, being a service that is not advertised,
- [section omitted - not relevant to this article]
- a service that is concerned primarily with the provision of:
  - lessons or coaching in, or providing for participation in, a cultural, recreational, religious or sporting activity, or
  - private tutoring,
- a service under which formal education in accordance with the school curriculum set out in Part 3 of the [Education Act 1990](#) is provided by a government school or a registered non-government school within the meaning of that Act.

Source: [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/cayypapa1998442/s200.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/cayypapa1998442/s200.html)

The main issue here is s200(2)(e) which gives exemption to businesses on the basis of their core function. This particular section has been misconstrued by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) to threaten the closure of at least one tuition provider.

## What is happening to tuition for Indigenous Australian students?

The Indigenous Tuition Assistance Scheme (ITAS) and Parents School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI) have been radically altered. Having been in the domain of the Commonwealth for many years, this year it has been moved to become a State government responsibility. Under the previous scheme many tutors and tutoring businesses were involved in the provision of support for Indigenous Australian students. While the transfer is underway it has been difficult to get a sense of how tutors will be involved in the new administrative arrangements. This presents a number of difficulties:

- Continuity for students who have been using the scheme in prior years;
- Increased pressure on schools who will have to create new arrangements for the students who fall into the funding categories;
- The discontinuity and possible loss of intellectual capital built up by tutoring businesses in providing support to students under the scheme;
- The possible loss of revenue to business which had prior involvement under the ITAS and PSPI schemes.

It is the view of the ATA that the State government should work with the ATA in order to best meet the needs of Indigenous Australian students. In such a way the interests of the students can be placed foremost and all stakeholders can work towards the achievement of the best outcomes. In a letter received by the ATA (see below) David Burrell makes the case for a cogent ATA response. Any other members who have a view are encouraged to email the ATA office.

*Dear Board Members,*

*Monica and I own Master Coaching Hawkesbury. We have been involved in ITAS and PSPI programs administered by the Commonwealth Government.*

*We received a letter...detailing the changes in the funding arrangements, which transfers the responsibility from the Commonwealth to the States and their schools.*

*It seems clear that representation to State Education Authorities by ATA is now appropriate. Schools could be encouraged to seek tutorial assistance for Indigenous children from ATA members only.*

*In the past, schools typically have had a somewhat chequered relationship with Tutors and Tutor Companies, and this needs to be turned around so that we can continue to be a significant part of supporting Indigenous Education in Australia.*

*Sincerely,*

*David Burrell – Principal, Master Coaching Hawkesbury.*

## Lobbying News

The ATA has been actively lobbying on several fronts and in various forums for some time.

### National lobbying

for some time in regards to the Education Tax Rebate (ETR). Apart from personal representation by a Board delegation the ATA has also drafted tutor and parent letters which tutors should use to send a message to Canberra. Other issues also arise from time to time. In this issue of Within Tuition you will read about the ITAS program and changes which have affected students and also tuition businesses.

### State-based initiatives

#### Queensland

In Queensland there is a move to have Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) and the currency of teacher certification and accreditation maintained after teachers have left teaching but continue to teach through tutoring.

The ATA encourages members to identify areas where the profile of tutoring organisations can be raised and their value recognised. Please email us at [mlopez@ata.edu.au](mailto:mlopez@ata.edu.au)

## ATA in the Press

The ATA continues to be used as a resources for advice and issues relevant to the tuition industry nationally. In the past couple of months the ATA has been

quoted extensively in an article which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. This article, titled "Get by with a little help" was written by Owen Thomson. His argument was essentially that tutors can be useful in assisting student motivation. The full text of the article can be viewed and also downloaded from the ATA website. You can visit the ATA homepage at [www.ata.edu.au](http://www.ata.edu.au) and then click on the 'Downloads' link. Alternatively you can put this url in the search engine directly:

[http://www.ata.edu.au/component?option=com\\_docman/task,cat\\_view/gid,18/Itemid,5/](http://www.ata.edu.au/component?option=com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,18/Itemid,5/)

The second article appeared in a West Australian journal called The Epoch Times. It was a second page article and had a focus on new arrivals and their experience of tutoring as a means of accessing school and university education. It was written by a student journalist, Megan Tran. It is also available from the ATA website.

### International Membership

The ATA now has international members. We have a member currently in Singapore and it is expected that over the next few months more offshore members will join the ATA. We know that a New Zealand tutoring Association is imminent and that the ATA is setting the standard in regards to the issue of benchmarking minimum standards both nationally and internationally.



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## MULTILIT (Making Up Lost Time in Literacy): a research-based approach to teach low-progress readers

Learning to read can be almost effortless for one child and yet, for another, can be extraordinarily complex and frustrating. Many teachers are puzzled as to why this is so and, more importantly, what to do about it. Basic literacy is, after all, the foundation for future academic and employment success.

The good news is that there is an enormous body of research explaining exactly what needs to be done to help these low progress readers succeed. And it is not rocket science! The first point to remember is that reading is a learned skill unlike learning to talk which is acquired naturally. Reading, therefore, needs to be explicitly and systematically taught and not left to chance.

Over the last eight years the governments of Australia, USA and the UK have commissioned full inquiries into the teaching of reading which all came to the same conclusion after examining the scientific evidence. Children need to receive instruction in five key areas to become skilled readers: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Those children struggling to learn to read need **intensive** instruction in these areas. It is not enough to provide struggling readers with a sympathetic ear only or simply 'more practice'.

**MULTILIT (Making Up Lost Time In Literacy)** is a research initiative of Macquarie University. Professor Kevin Wheldall, director of MUSEC (Macquarie University Special Education Centre), and his team of researchers have, over the past 15 years, endeavoured to find the most effective way of helping low-progress readers catch up with their peers by developing practical tools to support the research. Theory is all very well but teachers and tutors need practical application!

The MULTILIT approach to the teaching of reading incorporates all the key findings of the Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005) and addresses each of the five key areas mentioned above. Specifically, the **MULTILIT Reading Tutor Program (revised)** was developed to put the research into effective teaching practice. It is an efficient and powerful approach to helping readers who are significantly behind their peers.

The Program is tutor led and should be delivered as often as possible during the week. It has three strands: Word Attack (phonics), Sight Words and Reinforced Reading (reading of connected text). A placement test establishes a student's current level of ability to use phonics to decode words and will reveal any gaps or weaknesses in this area. Developing efficient and accurate phonic skills is critical to the acquisition of literacy. The tutor then systematically works through each level of the word attack component of the program, applying scripted interventions when errors are made.

Once a student has mastered their current level of word attack, they progress to the next level. Students, very quickly, begin to make progress and gain skill and confidence to tackle unfamiliar words. Both accuracy and fluency are addressed through the Word Attack part of the lesson. Accurate reading is vital, but unless you are reading with some speed (fluency), your comprehension is compromised.

The second component of the program teaches the student to automatically recognise 200 sight words. Automatic recognition of these words improves a reader's ability to read text fluently and with understanding. Again, a placement test is used to determine the correct commencement point in the program.

The last strand of the program is known as Reinforced Reading. This component ties everything together. It is during this part of the lesson that the student learns to generalise the skills learnt using levelled or real books, chosen carefully to be at an instructional level. Just 15 minutes of Reinforced Reading a day can make a significant difference to reading progress. The program is suitable for any low progress reader aged 7 years and above (no upper limit).

The **MULTILIT Reading Tutor Program** has been trialed and researched in a variety of contexts including schools, community projects and at the MULTILIT reading clinic. Hundreds of high and primary schools across Australia have chosen MULTILIT to help struggling readers succeed. Children typically make 15 months progress in word recognition in just two terms of instruction.

Tutors are often entrusted with the most challenging children - choosing an appropriate, evidence-based program to ensure they have the greatest chance of success is imperative. Licensing is now available so that individual tutors and clinics can enjoy using MULTILIT in their business. A MULTILIT licence includes accreditation training to use the program and the kit itself. An ongoing fee entitles you to refresher training, discounts and support. It is only right that every tutor is confident that the reading programs they offer their clients are well researched and in alignment with best practice.

If you would like to find out more about MULTILIT or MULTILIT licensing for your business, please contact **02 9886 6606** or visit our website for more information [www.multilit.com](http://www.multilit.com).

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### **ATA Board Meetings**

The ATA Board meets from time to time (at least four times per year face to face) and conducts regular teleconferences. The ATA Board aims to improve the range of services offered to ATA members. Members are welcome to contribute items for the Board to discuss through contacting one of the Board members or emailing the ATA at the addresses listed below. Members are invited to contribute to the newsletter, which is published quarterly. The ATA Newsletter is distributed in hard copy form to all members and is also available on the ATA website for download.

Within Tuition Editor: Mohan Dhall  
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#### **Contacting Us**

For contributions and comments please email the ATA [mdhall@ata.edu.au](mailto:mdhall@ata.edu.au) or [mlopez@ata.edu.au](mailto:mlopez@ata.edu.au); mail us at:

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### **STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS**

#### **ATA Updates:**

##### **An Even Start (AES)**

The An Even Start (AES) Program is currently being assessed by Urbis - an organisation contracted by DEEWR to interview and compile an assessment of the program from the point of view of the stakeholders.

##### **Sticker availability**

The ATA has stickers available for car bumpers and for windows of premises. All new members received two such stickers upon acceptance of membership. Additional stickers can be purchased from \$1 each from the office.

##### **Back Issues of the Newsletter**

Previous issues of the ATA newsletter are available upon request. Moreover, they can be downloaded from the ATA website: [www.ata.edu.au](http://www.ata.edu.au).

##### **Updates to the ATA Website**

The ATA website is continually being updated and improved in order to provide members with better information and to guide and direct tutors as to the activities of the Board. In recent months we have engaged both parents and tutors in a lobbying campaign aimed at the Federal government's Education Tax Rebate which at present specifically excludes tuition. We also have international members and are currently developing a scholarship scheme.