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MEDIA RELEASE

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PARENTS SHOULD DO THEIR HOMEWORK ON TUTORING

NSW Fair Trading is encouraging parents considering tutoring for their children to do their homework to ensure they receive a quality service.

Fair Trading Deputy Commissioner, Steve Griffin, said the right tutor could complement the excellent education provided by schools, but parents should be wary of bogus offers.

“Parents should exercise caution with overseas or interstate institutions promoting their services on the internet,” he said.

“Read any contract carefully before signing and be aware of any cancellation conditions.

“Ask how ‘guarantees’ of success can be substantiated and be careful of companies that rely on web-based communication and don’t offer telephone numbers or office locations.”

Mr Griffin said NSW Fair Trading received 424 complaints about education services in 2009, mostly relating to refunds, cancellations, fees and unsatisfactory service.

“A *Tutoring Tips for Parents* fact sheet is available on the Fair Trading website at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au or by calling 13 32 20,” he said.

“I strongly recommend parents read this factsheet before signing up for any tutoring service. The fact sheet is available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hindi, Korean and Arabic.”

The Australian Tutoring Association’s (ATA) Mohan Dhall recommends parents ask questions about the total cost of services as well as refund and cancellation policies.

“In these hard economic times consumers need to be particularly wary about the cost of tutoring,” he said.

“Consumers should always ask for full disclosure about the qualifications and experience of tutors prior to engaging them.”

Mr Griffin said parents should check that any computer-based learning program software was compatible with their computer.

“Make sure you have a fast enough internet connection if you opt for online tutoring,” he said.

The Australian Tutoring Association’s Code of Conduct requires businesses to:

- have a refund policy
- fully disclose staff qualifications
- avoid exaggerated or misleading claims, deceptive practices or high pressure selling
- accurately report on the students’ progress and avoid creating dependencies
- interview prospective staff face-to-face and in person, including interstate staff
- refuse to do the work for the student
- disclose the form(s) of testing used when assessing students
- disclose the relationship between any programs of study and the curriculum offered by the Board of Studies
- have a written grievance procedure available for parents in the event of any dispute.

Parents who are experiencing problems with tutoring services can contact NSW Fair Trading on 13 32 20 or at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

Fair Trading provides free information about your rights and options to resolve the dispute.

This includes mediation of the complaint by Fair Trading staff or referral to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT), which provides independent, low cost and accessible dispute resolution in consumer disputes.

You can also contact the Australian Tutoring Association. They have additional fact sheets available on:

- Plagiarism
- How young is too young?
- In-home tutoring and agencies
- Computer-based tutoring and online learning
- Tutor and parent expectations.

You can visit the ATA on their website at www.ata.edu.au or call 02 9704 5724. The ATA may assist in conflict resolution through mediation and negotiation.

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