

School tutoring increases amid warnings of burn-out

Megan Tran

The Epoch Times

Rockdale student Debbie Tran recently learned that she has secured a place at a selective state school on Sydney's south side for the 2009 school year. The girl's father, Cam Tran, 57, is relieved. Mr Tran, who escaped the Vietnam War as a refugee with his nine siblings and parents on an overcrowded boat, believes education is the key to a better life. The 11-year-old is one of four sisters who were all tutored to prepare them for the selective schools test. Tutoring, he believes, is an essential part of this process. "When the kids get into a selective school, we know we're safe because the kids have a focus on homework and study. If you get into a good school, your future is clear." Associate Professor Alan Watson at the School of Education, UNSW, however, warns of burn-out. "If a child is too focused on tutoring, they become very narrow in other interests," he told *The Epoch Times*. "Human capacities and attitudes are likely to be neglected." Professor Watson said many Asian Australians send their children to a tutoring centre because they want them to succeed in life. "There is a long history in certain groups of people on the focus of education. Most people place value on education, which is a means of forging ahead economically." For most refugees, the opportunities Australia offers are a means of breaking a generational cycle of struggle. "Having come from a poor background with little opportunity, they like to see their children seize the opportunities available in Australia." "Asian parents expect their kids to have very skilled jobs, but not every student can do it," he said. His two middle daughters were tutored, but did not make it into selective schools. Initially, Mr Tran says, he "was not happy" about it, but he is now more accepting of the outcome. "I try my best and they try their best; that's all I can ask for."

Tutoring centres increase

Professor Watson said the number of tutoring centres around Australia has increased over the last decade. He says some tutoring facilities can be helpful and their growing popularity is an indication of the increased competition for better education. "Tutoring is often provided outside the school and is something added onto what the school is teaching," he said. "It may be sought after if the child is falling behind and in this case, it provides extra support if they have not managed at school, particularly in large classes." Chief Executive Mohan Dhall of the Australian Tutoring Association said: "They place a high value on academic learning in order to give their children the chance to access university education and become more accepted into society." Mr Dhall said most tutoring was "about providing remedial support and building self-esteem in struggling students".