



Balancing act: Anna Liu with her children Lionel, 12, (left) and Serena, 10. Anna believes the Australian education system encourages children to be all-rounders.

Picture: Jane Dyson

Chinese children pushed too hard

By Jim Gainsford

BEVERLY Hills mum Anna Liu has a message for her fellow parents of Chinese heritage.

"Your children are individuals," she said. "You don't own them."

Anna is well-placed to comment on the challenges facing the children of Chinese families living in Australia.

She has two children of her own and is the family support worker with St George Family Support Services.

Recently, there has been an explosion in numbers of many Chinese students who are going to extra tutoring after school, on the weekends and during the holidays.

The issue emerged when social workers spoke to students at the St George High School forum last year.

School principals and counsellors all

spoke of the pressure to study and achieve academically for children of Chinese heritage.

The same issue emerged when they spoke to primary schools.

"We have heard cases of children as young as three or four being tutored to start kindergarten," Mrs Liu said.

"In China it is our tradition is to focus on the academic, while sports and music are additional.

"If you are not good academically, you are seen as a failure."

The problem was confirmed by the principal of a St George primary school, who did not want to be named.

"We have children as young seven or eight going to tutoring," she said.

"There is pressure on them to decide whether to finish their school homework or their tutoring homework.

"Some feel they have to finish their

tutoring homework because their parents have paid for their tutoring.

"We try to tell parents that they need to give their children a more rounded experience including sport, music and other social activities."

St George Family Support Services is launching a pilot Chinese family education project, funded by Kogarah Council, which will explore the difference between the Chinese and Australian education systems.

The project aims to help Chinese parents to promote a more balanced life for children academically, physically and emotionally, and explore how to prevent mental illness arising from study pressures.

The pilot Chinese Family Education Project will have its third session on March 22 at Carlton Public School from 9.30am to 11.30am.