



Age
08-Jul-2010
Page: 2
General News
By: Miranda Luby
Market: Melbourne
Circulation: 202100
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 108.87 sq.cms
Frequency: MTWTFS-

Migrant children in cultural pinch

By **MIRANDA LUBY**

CHILDREN in migrant families are feeling tired, anxious and frustrated from the pressure of being cultural translators for their parents, researchers say.

Migrant children going through school in Australia adapt more quickly to the language and culture than their parents and often take adult roles from them such as banking and shopping.

This role reversal can damage the child's mental and emotional health, the Australian Institute of family studies conference heard in Melbourne yesterday.

The study by Macquarie University found that while the children struggled with the extra responsibility, parents often felt relieved to be able to rely on their children as mediators.

"She helps me with the shopping, or when we go to the doctor, and I keep on asking her how do you say this or that. She is my teacher," said a mother

from one of the 20 migrant families the study focused on.

Dr Maria Florencia Amigo, of the Children and Families Research Centre at Macquarie University, said: "This role reversal has been found in studies before but there hasn't been enough research done on the implications for the child. Usually they've been studied as objects without being asked questions about how they feel."

Migrant children were also acting as language brokers for teachers and newer migrant children at school, putting pressure on their academic performances.

"It takes up a lot of my time during class and sometimes I have to finish my assignments another day," said six-year-old "Rocio" whose name was changed in the research presented to the conference.

In 2006, 35 per cent of children in Australia (nearly 1.5 million) lived in migrant families, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.