

World first project to help children with special needs

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In a world first, Monash University researchers will lead a new project that will provide a public health approach, evidence based, parenting support to parents of children with a disability.

The Stepping Stones Triple P Project will see 114 health and education professionals across Victoria trained to provide the parenting support and will be led by Monash University School of Clinical Science (Monash Health) Emeritus Professor Bruce Tonge.

Professor Tonge will head the Victorian research team that will include researchers from the Universities of Sydney and Queensland.

The Stepping Stones Triple P Project is the first population level parenting intervention of its kind for children with special needs that aims to reduce the emotional and [behavioural problems](#) in children with a disability.

One of the benefits of the [project](#) will be to help lower parent stress levels by making parenting support freely available to every parent of a child with a disability in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

In Victoria, parents and caregivers of 60,000 children aged 2-12 years with a disability will receive almost two years of free access to support as part of the project.

Professor Tonge said research showed the Stepping Stones project could reduce child behaviour problems by more than 70 per cent and significantly lower parent stress and depression levels.

Parents who have previously done Stepping Stones also reported a greater success in teaching their children new skills and higher levels of parental competence and satisfaction.

Professor Tonge is optimistic about achieving real change across Victoria through the unique, population-wide parenting intervention.

"Helping parents introduce effective behaviour management strategies while their children are still young can reduce, and in some cases prevent, problem behaviour from becoming entrenched," Professor Tonge said.

"This is important because left untreated, problem behaviour in children

with a disability tends to worsen during childhood and adolescence and continue into adulthood."

Professor Tonge said research showed that young people with a disability experienced up to four times the emotional and behavioural problems of typically developing [children](#), adding it was a heavy burden and cost on parents, teachers and society.

Provided by Monash University

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