

Media Release



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Intervene early: Telstra Foundation

Research indicating that early intervention can help save children and young people from very troubled lives has prompted the Telstra Foundation to allocate nearly \$1 million in new grants to programs in this area, it was announced today.

Intervening in early childhood and at key transition points in development can turn a child's life around, research shows, and can help prevent a broad range of interrelated problems such as child abuse and neglect, illiteracy, drug dependence and juvenile crime.

Telstra Foundation Chairman Herb Elliott said today, "It is increasingly understood that the same set of interventions can achieve positive outcomes across areas of health, education and crime prevention, because the risk factors influencing these outcomes tend to be closely linked."

Early intervention is one of the four new priority areas for the Telstra Foundation's Community Development Fund. The other focus areas are childhood obesity, Indigenous community development, and gifted and talented children and young people.

Mr Elliott said, "This targeted approach means much needed funds will be available to help address social issues affecting the lives of Australian children and young people."

Expectant dads will be supported to become better and more confident parents in one of the early intervention programs funded by \$1.83 million of grants from the Telstra Foundation. It was one of 54 projects that received grants in this round.

"Dad's Connect", run by Good Beginnings Australia Ltd, will help new fathers be confident and comfortable parents after receiving a grant of \$19,000 per year for two years from the Telstra Foundation.

The pre-natal program, involving education programs run by two Victorian hospitals, The Royal Women's Hospital and Biralee Maternity Service, emphasises the crucial role that fathers play in the health and well being of their children. The program will also prepare new dads for the lifestyle and relationship changes that result from a new baby.

"Making a positive and lasting difference to the lives of Australian children and young people."

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Deputy National Director, Paul Pritchard says: “Thanks to the Telstra Foundation, this project will enable Good Beginnings Australia to formally test and prove the value of connecting with expectant dads to enhance their parenting skills. It will promote parenting readiness, confidence and awareness of the critical role fathers play in their child’s growth, development, health, and well-being.”

2003 Australian of the Year and Telstra Foundation Board Member Professor Fiona Stanley says: “The scientific evidence is overwhelming to support the fact that what happens early in a child’s life can have life-long impacts. I’m so pleased to see the Telstra Foundation supporting these really important early intervention research and community programs that can make such a difference to the lives of many Australian children.”

Other programs funded by the Telstra Foundation in the area of early childhood intervention include:

- educating parents and guardians about the effects of inappropriate media on early brain development - *Australian Council on Children and the Media*;
- improving opportunities for at risk pregnant teenagers and young parents - *Beenleigh Area Youth Service*;
- supporting young homeless mothers with mental health or drug use problems - *Mackillop Family Services*;
- helping parents deal with challenging behaviours in pre-school children - *Murdoch Children’s Research Institute*;
- providing resources to assist parents to communicate with their children when a parent has cancer - *The Pam McLean Cancer Communications Centre, the Cancer Council NSW and Cansupport*;
- reducing common behavioural and emotional problems in young children and their families - *The Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland*;
- paediatric asthma education for the Torres Strait region - *Royal Children’s Hospital Foundation* and the *Torres Strait Islander Health authorities*
- a website for children to help manage problems arising from anger, bullying and depression - *The Bouverie Centre*; and
- learning tools for parents to develop communication with their deaf babies and children - *Western Australian Foundation for Deaf Children*.

For more information about the Telstra Foundation grants, please visit
www.telstrafoundation.com

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