Executive Summary:

This document is a synopsis of the findings of an independent report into the cost-effectiveness of Triple-P Positive Parenting Program®.

The report was undertaken by Cathy Mihalopoulos of the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne.

Its purpose was to examine the economic case for the introduction of Triple P on a population-wide basis to reduce the prevalence of conduct disorder in children and adolescents.

Mihalopoulos states: Conduct disorders are among the more enduring childhood and adolescent problems and represent a substantial cost to individuals and communities.

An economic evaluation of Triple P was carried out to answer two questions:

1. How many cases of conduct disorder need to be averted before the program pays for itself.
2. The incremental cost-effectiveness of Triple P in terms of the number of cases of conduct disorder averted.

The results of Mihalopoulos’s analysis is that:

- Triple P has the potential to avert at least 26 per cent of cases of conduct disorder.
- To pay for itself, Triple P need only avert 1.5 per cent of cases.
- As a consequence, Triple P has very strong economic credentials for widespread implementation.

Background and analysis:

Triple P is a parenting and family support strategy that aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children.

It has been developed over 25 years by Professor Matt Sanders and colleagues from the Parenting and Family Support Centre in the University of Queensland School of Psychology.

Triple P tackles the problems by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. The program is available through GPs, preschools, schools and community health centres.

Mihalopoulos states: Numerous case study reviews have concluded that improving parenting skills is one of the most practical and cost-effective ways of improving the well-being and health status of children, and reducing the incidence of conduct problems.

Triple P was assessed mainly using threshold analysis – an economically credentialed technique which assists decision-makers in the appropriate allocation of resources. This was supported by an incremental
cost-benefit analysis where “cost” is defined as all resource use associated with delivering the Triple P program and “benefit” the costs offset by successful aversion of cases of conduct disorder.

The report drew on statistics modelled for the population of Queensland. Likely numbers of children with conduct disorder for Queensland were extracted using prevalence rates in the Australian National Survey of Mental health and Wellbeing (Sawyer et al, 2000).

Costs associated with the delivery of Triple P include costs of printed parental material brochures etc), health professional costs and education staff costs.

Benefit is assessed as the saving of costs associated with conduct disorder – and the report recognises the largest impact of such disorders is in economic sectors outside the health sector, particularly criminal justice and education.


The report points out that extrapolation of the Queensland statistics into a wider population context will not adversely affect the findings.

Results of the analysis showed:

- In 2002 there were approximately 12,582 children aged between 6 and 12 with conduct disorder.
- The costs of conduct disorder for children and adolescents in Queensland until the age of 28 are $1.4 billion.
- Triple P would only need to avert 1.5 per cent of cases of conduct disorder to pay for itself. With greater levels of effectiveness, Triple P costs less than the amount it saves.
- The analysis shows the Triple P has the potential to avert at least 26 per cent of cases of conduct disorder. At this level, costs of Triple P are assessed at $9.6 million against cost savings of $40.6 million.
- Triple P family intervention has the potential to provide further, non-quantified cost benefits such as a reduction in child abuse, improvements in parental quality of life, and wider societal benefits associated with less social delinquency and crime, says Mihalopoulos.

“The current analysis suggests that Triple P has very strong economic credentials for widespread implementation.”