

# Schools learn an emotional lesson

**E**MOTIONAL intelligence (EI) — the ability to understand, express and manage emotions — is as valuable as IQ at school, Brain Sciences Institute (BSI) director Prof Con Stough says.

He'd like to see EI become part of the curriculum and culture of schools, with training programs for students and staff.

Stough says last week's Conference on Emotional Intelligence in Secondary Schools at Swinburne University highlighted how EI is important for leadership, scholastic success, life satisfaction and relationships.

American research has shown that students who drop out of university within the first two years often have lower EI than those who stay, he says.

“People who can't manage their emotions, essentially being able to shift them from negative to positive emotions, get excessively stressed and can't deal with the demands of university life.”

EI development needs to start at school, so that students can better manage stress and study.

He says some techniques used to develop EI are the same as cognitive behaviour therapies used to help people cope with depression.

One example is the “ABCs of emotions”, where

A is an event; B is the thought you have about that event; and C is an emotional consequence.

If the telephone rings, you can have a negative thought if you think it's a telemarketer and feel anxiety or anger, or a positive thought if you think it's your boss offering you a pay rise.

“How we experience the world is a direct consequence of what we think,” Stough says. “Thoughts that are not healthy could be replaced with ones that are more effective.”

► **Swinburne University's Brain Sciences Institute is interested in helping schools and teachers develop effective EI programs. Email [cstough@swin.edu.au](mailto:cstough@swin.edu.au)**