

# WES HOSKING EDUCATION REPORTER

STRESSED-out teachers will be given vitamin supplements and have their brains scanned in a Melbourne-based trial aimed at tackling the condition.

Up to 200 participants are being recruited for the six-month project, designed to find a safe and natural way for workers to manage their stress levels.

Teachers have been identified as a key group to participate in the trial.

The findings could help reduce health-related compensation claims and lost productivity across all industries.

The Swinburne University of Technology study will require participants to take two multivitamins with a high con-

centration of B vitamins daily.

Some will get a placebo.

Biological measures such as heart rate and blood pressure will be taken along with blood samples to monitor vitamin levels and the concentration of the stress-linked compound homocysteine.

Some volunteers will also have MRI scans to monitor

brain function during cognitive tests.

All will answer regular questionnaires about their stress levels and mood.

Chief investigator Dr Luke Downey said that teachers were prime candidates for testing due to the high demands of the job.

About \$1.8 million in stress-

related compensation was paid to state school teachers in 2012, according to latest data.

Last week more than \$800,000 was awarded to a former high school teacher who had a breakdown after teaching unruly students.

"Organising 30 children, for instance, for a whole day — I would find that pretty stress-

ful," Dr Downey said. "There's a lot of preparation involved as well."

Dr Downey said occupational stress claims across all sectors cost Australia's economy \$14.8 billion a year.

Stress also caused about 15 per cent of workers to take a sick day each month. Vitamins firm Blackmores is part-funding the study.

**DETAILS:** 9214 4444 OR  
NUTRA@SWIN.EDU.AU  
wes.hosking@news.com.au