

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training – COVID-19

Minister for Education



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FUNDING TO HELP BUSHFIRE IMPACTED KINDERS

Early childhood services impacted by last summer's devastating bushfires will benefit from initiatives to help communities recover and receive trauma support.

Minister for Education James Merlino today announced \$500,000 to establish an Early Childhood Bushfire Recovery Grants program – a dedicated pool of relief early childhood educators and support for Beyond Blue bushfire recovery program to assist kindergartens in impacted areas.

Grants up to \$5,000 can be used to support educational incursions in services, buy program resources and complete projects previously led by kindergarten program volunteers.

Kindergarten services in Victoria's Alpine bushfire impacted areas of Ovens Murray and East Gippsland can apply for the grants as part of the Victorian Government's Bushfire Recovery package.

It is expected that up to 1,000 children and 50 teachers and educators will benefit from these support grants.

The Government will also provide funding towards the trauma support and recovery planning services in the local areas. Working together with Beyond Blue, these supports will ensure early childhood services and staff in the bushfire affected areas feel cared for in their recovery journey.

A dedicated team of relief staff will work across the 25 services delivering a funded kindergarten program in bushfire impacted areas. This initiative will allow the existing hard-working early childhood staff to take time off for their own mental wellbeing and/or to attend professional development days.

This funding is part of the \$22.7 million Government support package announced since January for families, children, students and teachers affected by the bushfires. This package includes \$3.65 million for early childhood education sector trauma support, recovery planning and rebuilding of facilities in the bushfire affected area.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"We are standing with communities to rebuild and recover from last summer's bushfires and helping funded kindergartens get back on their feet."

"Early childhood staff have gone above and beyond to support children and their families to learn while juggling the challenges of bushfires and a pandemic this year."