

Media Release

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Minister for Workplace Safety

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RECOVERY SUPPORT CONTINUES FOR BUSHFIRE-AFFECTED KINDERS

The Andrews Labor Government is giving kindergartens in Eastern and Northern Victoria the extra support they need for ongoing bushfire recovery, making sure children in bushfire-affected communities continue to get a great early education.

Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt today announced that 35 kindergartens affected by the 2019/20 bushfires across East Gippsland, Towong and Alpine shires will receive an additional *Early Childhood Bushfire Recovery Grant*, sharing in a total of \$250,000.

Each kindergarten will receive \$7,350 to help deliver high-quality learning programs for their children and offset the costs of educational activities like music classes, kinder gym sessions, excursions and visits from special guests like reptile experts and artists.

The grants can also be used towards buying educational resources or specialised equipment as well as helping complete small projects such as vegetable gardens, small playground upgrades, maintenance, and repairs.

The Early Childhood Bushfire Recovery Grants were initially available in 2021 as part of a \$22.7 million package aimed at supporting families, children, students and teachers most impacted by the bushfires – giving the community a boost during challenging times.

Throughout 2021, kindergarten services used the grants to purchase children’s toys, arts and crafts supplies and to fund projects to upgrade play spaces and establish sensory gardens for children.

In an Australian-first, the Labor Government is investing almost \$5 billion this decade to provide three-year-old children with access to an additional year of funded kindergarten programs.

From 2022, three-year-old children across the state will have access to at least five hours of kindergarten. Services will then scale up their hours to reach the full 15-hour program by 2029.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

“Early childhood staff at these services have gone above and beyond to support children and their families to learn while juggling the challenges of bushfires and a pandemic during these last two years.”

“Bushfire recovery is a long journey and we are supporting local communities to rebuild and recover by helping our kinders – and the families they serve – get back on their feet.”