

17 January 2020

## Beyond Blue welcomes Commonwealth funding for bushfire-affected early learning services and schools

Beyond Blue has welcomed the Commonwealth's commitment of \$8 million towards supporting mental health in early learning services and schools affected by bushfire.

The funding package allows Beyond Blue to provide additional support to educators and staff working in early learning services and schools affected by the bushfire crisis.

**Beyond Blue Chair The Hon Julia Gillard AC** said support would be made available through the national mental health in education initiative, [Be You](#).

"We will target this funding to help schools and early learning services in bushfire affected areas to recover and support their children, families and communities," Ms Gillard said.

"Children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to the emotional impact of disasters and they look to the adults around them for reassurance and protection.

"Our schools and early learning services will be at the heart of community-led recovery. They provide children and young people with familiar routines and these can be particularly useful in providing a sense of stability in hard times.

"While parents and families will be the main source of support for many students, learning environments where children and young people are helped to manage distress are a critical part of the recovery process."

The funding will allow Beyond Blue and its Be You delivery partners Early Childhood Australia and headspace to deploy hands-on, evidence-based support.

**Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said additional Be You staff would be deployed and evidence-based training, resources and advice specifically for bushfire-related trauma and distress would be offered to educators.

"Schools and early learning services know their communities and have strong relationships with students and their families," Ms Harman said.

"Additional Be You staff, training and resources will assist principals, educators and staff to support the mental health of their students and navigate and link them to the mental health services available to them.

"Self-care is also vital. We know from past disasters that providing resources to help children and young people also helps school and early learning services staff feel supported and this has benefits for their own emotional health recovery."

The \$8 million over 18 months will enable Beyond Blue and its partners Early Childhood Australia and headspace to:

- Work with schools and early learning services in current bushfire affected areas and other stakeholders to determine immediate and longer-term local needs
- Deploy Be You workers to support schools and early learning services in bushfire affected areas

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- Run evidence-based training for teachers and early learning services staff so they know what to look out for and how to support children and young people who may experience bushfire-related trauma and distress
- Provide evidence-based, practical information for parents and carers
- Help educators to navigate and connect students and families to available mental health services.

Ms Harman said Beyond Blue would co-ordinate and integrate Be You support to complement other Commonwealth, State and Territory recovery efforts to maximise impact and avoid confusion.

“At times like these, there’s no room for duplication or red tape so it’s vital that we work even more closely with schools, early learning services and others,” Ms Harman said.

In addition, Ms Harman said that Beyond Blue was finalising a free resource pack ready for the start of the 2020 school year.

“Every school and early learning service in Australia will be able to access these free resources from the Be You website from the start of Term 1. This will give educators and staff the facts about disaster-related trauma and stress, the normal and common reactions to a crisis like this and what to look out for in the weeks and months ahead,” Ms Harman said.

Funded by the Commonwealth, Be You is a free initiative that aims to equip early learning services and schools with the skills and strategies they need to ensure that every child, young person and staff member can achieve their best possible mental health.

Since its launch in November 2018, more than 95,000 individuals and 9,300 early learning services and schools across Australia have registered with Be You.

Mental health professionals are available on the Beyond Blue Support Service via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support) for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).

**ENDS**