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## Educator wellbeing at the heart of bushfire recovery

Trauma training and wellbeing workshops are among the supports being offered to educators in bushfire-affected communities as part of Beyond Blue's bushfire response.

Through Beyond Blue's national education initiative, Be You, 25 specialist support people, called Contact Liaison Officers, are now assisting educators in areas recovering from the summer bushfires to provide tailored local support.

**Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said educators in early learning services and schools were the backbone of communities, and have been supporting children, young people and families to cope with the impact of the fires and more recently, the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Educators give so much of themselves – they support the wellbeing of children, young people and the broader community, and this year they have done so through some very tough circumstances," Ms Harman said.

"It's vital that we look after educators as communities work to recover from the bushfires and pandemic. If our educators are supported, they're in a better position to work with families to nurture the wellbeing of children and young people. These meaningful relationships with educators will in turn enable learning communities to be more resilient."

This work is part of the [Be You Bushfire Response Program](#), which is led by Beyond Blue in partnership with Early Childhood Australia, headspace and Emerging Minds, and funded by the Australian Government.

Ms Harman said the program was supporting educators in ways tailored to suit the needs of different communities because each was unique, and the bushfires impacted them all in different ways.

"The Contact Liaison Officers are people that educators can lean on for support, assisting them to navigate community support services, helping them with recovery planning and supporting them to look after themselves and others," Ms Harman said.

The initial focus in many areas has been delivering educator wellbeing workshops, to encourage and equip educators with strategies to help them look after their own wellbeing as well as that of their colleagues.

Educator wellbeing strategies include:

- Making a regular time for yourself to pursue interests that make you feel good and help you relax.
- Talking through your challenges with colleagues, trusted family or friends, your GP or a counsellor.
- Getting enough sleep, eating well and exercising regularly.
- Challenging negative thoughts and trying to stay positive.

Through the Bushfire Response Program, schools and early learning services will also have access to trauma training events, both online and face-to-face. The training, which provides information including signs that indicate a child might benefit from more support, is designed to provide educators and families with skills and knowledge to support themselves and others before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.

A child or young person who may be feeling overwhelmed by stress or anxiety could be tired, withdrawn, irritable, fearful, unmotivated, moody, lose their appetite, need more comfort, have trouble concentrating and feel physically unwell.

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There are 13 priority areas across South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, covering an estimated 1700 schools and 2500 early learning services, which will benefit from the program:

- Adelaide Hills
- Kangaroo Island
- Ovens and Murray
- East Gippsland
- Southern NSW
- Snowy Valleys
- Illawarra-Shoalhaven
- Nepean-Blue Mountains
- Hunter New England
- Mid-North Coast
- Northern NSW
- Southern Darling Downs
- Central Queensland

This initial list of areas will continue to be developed and refined through consulting with bushfire-affected communities.

**ENDS**