The recent bushfires have had an immense impact on Victorian families and communities. In response, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is offering Kindergarten Service Bushfire Recovery Grants of between $1,000 and $10,000 to funded kindergarten programs affected by the Victorian bushfires.

What is a suitable use for the kindergarten service bushfire recovery grants?

The grant application may address one or more of the following categories:

1. Reduced capacity to collect fees
   Some services will be experiencing a reduced capacity to collect fees. This may be because services have closed for extended periods, or families are experiencing financial hardship due to the bushfires.

NOTE: families who have received a Department of Human Services Emergency Grant or an Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment are now eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy – bushfire response. Further information about the kindergarten fee subsidy is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/kindergarten/feesubsidy

2. Changes to enrolments
   Some services will have increased or decreased enrolments as a result of the bushfires. Families may have relocated to new services and there may have been an additional cost associated with accommodating those children. Alternatively, enrolments may have decreased and caused a loss of economies of scale projected in the annual budget.

3. Additional staffing costs (backfill, additional staff)
   As a result of the bushfires, some services may have incurred additional staffing costs. Staff members may have taken leave for personal reasons, for example, to defend their homes or support family members. Additional early childhood staff may have had to be employed to backfill these positions or to provide additional support to kindergarten staff and children through difficulties associated with the bushfires.

4. Reduced fundraising capacity resulting from the impact of the bushfires on the local kindergarten community
   This provision is applicable where the bushfires have affected a significant number of families in the local kindergarten community and diminished their capacity to contribute to, and fundraise for, the kindergarten service.

If your service would like to propose an alternate use of this grant, please discuss with your regional office.

Can the grants be used for counselling?

If a service has already engaged a counsellor to provide support to staff or children, this grant may be used to offset the cost of the counsellor.

In future, the Nurse on Call Bushfire Health and Counselling Line is available on 1300 60 60 24. This service is available to anyone directly, or indirectly, affected by the bushfires. This includes emergency workers, volunteers and service providers. Callers will first speak to a registered nurse, who will then transfer the call to a counselling professional such as a psychologist, mental health nurse, social worker or occupational therapist.

How will the grants be administered?

DEECD regional staff will contact kindergartens they know have been affected by the fires and facilitate a grant application.

If you think your service is eligible for a kindergarten service bushfire recovery grant, and you have not been contacted by mid April, please contact your regional office.

How much are the grants?

Grants of between $1,000 and $10,000 are available.
How will kindergarten services know if their grant application is successful?

You will be advised in writing by the DEECD Regional office.

How will the money be paid?

The amount of the grant will be added to the kindergarten’s next monthly payment from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

What other assistance is available?

For further information about bushfire recovery, services can access the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority’s community newsletter Recovery Update at www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au or call 1800 240 667 for further information.