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MEDIA RELEASE

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Child Care Subsidy activity test debt exemption for bushfire-affected families

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has welcomed the federal government's announcement today that it will provide an exemption to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity test debt for families in bushfire-affected communities.

ECA CEO Samantha Page said it was a relief to hear that families of more than 90 000 children in bushfire-affected areas—who access the CCS—would be exempt from activity test debts for the 2019-20 financial year.

'We are pleased the Education Minister has listened to our recommendation for CCS exemptions', said Ms Page. 'It is a relief to see compassion for bushfire-affected families who have experienced unprecedented destruction and disruption in recent weeks'.

To support families with educational expenses, the government will provide an additional $400 (raising the total to $800) for each child under 16 that qualifies for the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment.

The government will also commit an additional $8 million over 18 months towards mental health support. This funding will be made available through Be You, the national mental health in education initiative. An additional 25 staff will be deployed to provide face-to-face support and evidence-based training to early learning services and schools in bushfire-affected communities.

'This is an important investment for strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of children and their families whose lives have been disrupted by the devastating bushfires', Ms Page added.

'We look forward to working with the government as the delivery partner for Be You and as a voice for young children, Australia's largest national network of early childhood services and professionals', said Ms Page.

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Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight years, their families and early childhood professionals.