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Our public school buildings and facilities should be among the best in the world and this means keeping up with school maintenance every year. Our children, teachers and other school staff deserve to learn and teach in high quality facilities.

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## SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS HAVEN'T KEPT UP WITH SCHOOL MAINTENANCE

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There has been a backlog of school maintenance for many years over successive governments. An Education Department audit of government schools in 2011 found that the condition of more than a quarter of school buildings were below the 'appropriate threshold', and in need of additional maintenance funding.

In 2013, the Victorian Auditor General found that buildings in 30% of government schools were at the point of imminent failure, or had already failed and 3,000+ buildings were below the 'standard' that the Education Department requires for all school buildings. It recommended that DET require schools to adopt a long-term approach to maintaining assets and hold them to account for doing so'.<sup>(i)</sup>

The Auditor General found that an investment of \$420 million was required to address the maintenance backlog. The Greens took a policy to the 2014 state election to complete the \$420 million backlog in four years. That was do-able, but it hasn't been done.

In 2017, the Auditor General's follow up report on *Managing School Infrastructure* found that approximately 34% of the estimated (\$420 million) maintenance backlog, identified in 2013, had not been met and that 'DET had no up-to-date assessment of the backlog that has developed since 2012'.<sup>(ii)</sup>

It is not acceptable to expect our public school students, teachers and other staff to learn and work in sub-standard facilities. Our government schools are valuable public assets that shouldn't be allowed to deteriorate due to lack of regular maintenance.

## OUR PLAN

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The Greens plan for school maintenance is to ensure that:

- the outstanding school maintenance backlog is completed in two years; and
- a minimum 2% of the asset replacement value (ARV) of government schools is invested every year in maintenance. This allows 1.5 per cent for preventive maintenance and 0.5 per cent for unplanned or unforeseen repairs and replacements for all schools.



2% of the ARV is the minimum industry standard for maintenance. We will conduct a review after 5 years to assess if the 2% is sufficient.

## THE 2017 AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The 2017 report also found that 'weaknesses remain in how the DET holds schools accountable for their role in managing school assets and that school maintenance **continues to be underfunded** and is at **below industry standards**'. As a result, 'schools will continue to postpone much-needed repairs and struggle to maintain their assets effectively'.

'As the DET is ultimately accountable for Victoria's government schools, its lack of oversight and accountability has compromised its ability to effectively manage school assets under its control' <sup>(i)</sup> and has left too many schools with ongoing maintenance issues.

The Report stated that 'for the past 10 years, funding for maintenance has been well below industry standards, which has contributed to the degradation of school buildings.' <sup>(ii)</sup>

The funding is also well below the funding needed to bring assets up to a condition that will be more cost-effective to maintain.' <sup>(iii)</sup>

The report also stated that:

'Ineffective management of school assets can compromise educational outcomes, be more costly in the long term and adversely affect the health and safety of students, staff and visitors.' <sup>(iii)</sup>

The Auditor General recommended that the DET develop an investment strategy for maintenance of government school assets over the entire life of assets. <sup>(iii)</sup>

## HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Over the forward estimates, our plan includes:

- Completing the school maintenance backlog in budget years 2109-20 and 2020-21 at a cost of \$89.7 million.
- Phasing in an annual allocation of 2% of the asset replacement value (ARV) of public schools, will cost \$378.6 million over the 2018-19 budget and forward estimates, and \$1,256.3 million over the ten year period 2018-19 to 2028-29.

The Greens' plan has been costed by the Parliamentary Budget office and will mean that the outstanding maintenance backlog will be completed within two budgets – 2019-20 and 2020-21 - ten years after it was first quantified.

Importantly, future governments can avoid ever getting into another school maintenance backlog situation, by ensuring that a guaranteed level of funding is allocated for school maintenance every year, so that routine maintenance occurs regularly and as needed.

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<sup>(i)</sup> VAGO: *Implementation of School Infrastructure Programs, 2013*

<sup>(ii)</sup> VAGO: *Managing School Infrastructure, 2017*