

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for Emergency Services



Friday, 17 November, 2017

ARARAT STUDENTS TO ENJOY MODERN NEW CLASSROOMS

Work will begin to replace classrooms recently damaged in a fire at Ararat West Primary School thanks to a \$2.1 million funding boost from the Andrews Labor Government.

Visiting the school today, Minister for Education James Merlino announced a new modular building would be constructed to replace Block B which was damaged by the fire. The new building will include classrooms, an art and craft room and staff working areas.

Students returned to the school this week following the fire last month which forced them to relocate temporarily to Ararat Secondary College.

The school is the latest to receive funding as part of the Labor Government's \$155 million program of asbestos removal and building replacement. Across the state the first 26 schools have now been announced to receive modular buildings as part of the rollout.

These new, innovative buildings reduce planning and building times, meaning students and teachers will get these brand new facilities sooner, with less disruption to learning and teaching programs.

Work is expected to begin in March 2018 and be completed in mid-2018 in time for the beginning of Term 3.

As part of its emergency response to the fire, the Labor Government also invested \$370,000 to furnish and install relocatable buildings at the site.

The Government undertook an extensive, state-wide audit of 1,712 government schools, which found 497 schools contained high-risk asbestos. The high-risk asbestos was removed from all of these schools by March 2016.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* provided \$85 million to remove more asbestos from more schools, including funding to install the first 30 of the 100 proposed modular school rooms.

A full list of schools already announced as part of the program can be found at: <http://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/Pages/Permanent-Modular-School-Buildings-Program.aspx>

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"The fire had a big impact on this school community that is why it is so important that we quickly responded to give these kids the facilities they need."

"Every child deserves to have great facilities, great teachers and get a great education and that is what we are doing right across the state."

Quote attributable to Member for Western Victoria Jaala Pulford

"This incident has demonstrated the strength of the Ararat community and it gives us great pleasure to bring some positive news after such a sad event."