



BUILT SHADE STRUCTURES IN SCHOOLS POLICY

Version 2 | May 2018

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- To summarise the roles and responsibilities of schools in the installation and maintenance of built shade structures.
- To provide schools with best practice information on the design and construction of built shade structures.

This policy aligns with the following school asset lifecycle stage



RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

- *National Construction Code (NCC)*
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#)

POLICY STATEMENT

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring all Victorian government schools provide a safe and secure learning environment for the school community, and providing adequate shade is an important part of protecting the wellbeing of staff and students. Schools are required to ensure there is sufficient shelter and trees to adequately shade school grounds, and this often required the installation of built shade structures.

Schools intending to construct a new built shade structure must obtain the required approvals (including a building permit) for the work and a copy of the certified structural computations for the structure from a structural engineer. Built shade structures must be constructed in accordance with National Construction Code and relevant Australian Standards by a registered builder.

The integrity and safety of existing built shade structures must be assessed and maintained on a regular basis.

RATIONALE

Scientific evidence indicates that childhood and adolescent exposure to Ultra-Violet (UV) radiation contributes significantly to the risk of developing skin cancer in later life.

Shade is one of the most effective sun protection strategies schools can use to help protect students and staff from overexposure to UV. This is particularly important during school hours when UV levels are often at their peak. Good quality shade can reduce overall exposure to the sun's UV by up to 75%.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Well-designed shade ensures that outdoor space is comfortable to use in all seasons, protects users from direct and indirect sources of UV radiation and is attractive, practical and environmentally friendly.

Built shade design specifications

All parts of a built shade structure are required to be located within the school's

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This document is available online at:

<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/Services/Schools/Infrastructure/Pages/Home.aspx>



property boundaries, including the footings of the posts.

Care should also be taken to ensure the built shade structure is located and designed to avoid water run-off into neighbouring properties, buildings or over entrances.

Schools must refer to the applicable sections of the Department's *Guidelines for School Playgrounds – Playground safety management* (section 3.2.5) and the *Building Quality Standards Handbook*. SunSmart's *Shade Guidelines* may also be referred to when planning and designing built and natural shade systems.

School grounds used for community joint use should also reflect a local council's shade or open space strategy if applicable.

AS/NZS 1170.2 Structural Design Action – Wind Actions

Built shade, especially shade sails, can be strongly affected by wind loads and require secure connections at the base of the supporting structures to withstand the forces imparted by lateral wind forces.

It is essential to ensure that these structures are built to the required structural integrity so as to sustain likely forces that may act upon them.

AS/NZS 1170.2 sets out procedures for determining wind speeds and resulting wind actions to be used in the structural design of applicable structures, including built shade.

Maintenance of built shade

All existing fabric shade/sail support structures are to be visually checked for safety at least once every three months, and any visual signs of distress, wear or tear to be further investigated by a registered structural engineer.

Periodic structural inspections are to be undertaken by a registered structural engineer to assess the integrity and safety of the support structure issued with a building permit is conducted every 3 years.

As built shade structures do not attract SRP funding or contribute to a school's entitlement assessment, all ongoing

maintenance and audit costs are the responsibility of the school.

A section specifically dealing with the inspections of built shade structures has been added to the inspection master list within the School Maintenance System (SMS). Inspection orders are to be entered into SMS

School security during holiday periods

Principals should consider appropriate action following a review of their school's history of security incidents in preparation of their schools for holiday periods. This may include taking down shade sails during holiday periods.

Planning exemption

Under Section 16 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the Victorian Government is exempt from obtaining planning permits for construction at government schools. As such, the Minister for Education is exempt from any requirements to obtain a planning permit for any provision imposed under a planning scheme.

However, while schools do not require a planning permit for the construction of a shade sail, the VSBA requires schools to consult with local councils and, where appropriate, other relevant bodies to minimize the impact on any heritage overlays on school sites.

School asset drawings

As stated in the *School Asset Drawings policy*, changes must be communicated to the VSBA whenever a change to the physical configuration occurs. This includes the installation of shade structures.

Shade sails are to be recorded in the VSBA's asset register as non-entitled, non-cleanable facilities.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Department policy and guidelines

- [Guidelines for School Playgrounds – Playground safety management](#)
- [Building Quality Standards Handbook](#)
- [School Asset Drawings policy](#)



Other documents and links

- [National Construction Code](#)
- [SunSmart](#) (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and Cancer Council Victoria)
- [Shade Guidelines](#) (SunSmart, 2015)
- AS/NZS 1170.2 Structural Design Action – Wind Actions (via [Australian Standards Online database](#))

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