

Greener Government School Buildings

Round 5 program guidelines

Published by

Victorian School Building Authority
Department of Education
Melbourne

March 2026

© March 2026 State of Victoria (Department of Education)

The copyright in this document is owned by the State of Victoria (Department of Education), or in the case of some materials, by third parties (third party materials). No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, the National Education Access Licence for Early childhoods (NEALS) (see below), or with permission.

An educational institution situated in Australia which is not conducted for profit, or a body responsible for administering such an institution may copy and communicate the materials, other than third-party materials, for the educational purposes of the institution.

Authorised by

Department of Education, 2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002.

This document is also available on the internet at:

www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/greener-government-school-buildings-program

Contents

1. Introduction	4
Program conditions	4
Program timelines	4
2. Key considerations	5
3. Funding	5
What will be funded	5
What will not be funded	5
School financial contributions	6
4. Financial conditions	6
5. Evaluation process	8
Eligibility criteria	8
Prioritisation criteria	8
Suitability criteria	8
Recommended projects	9
6. On-site assessment and feasibility	9
Assessment outcomes	10
7. Commitment deed poll agreement	10
8. Applications	10
Lodging applications	10
Application required information	10
Application ineligibility	12
9. Delivery	12
Project management	12
Installers	12
Additional works	13
Post-installation	13
10. Privacy	13
11. Events	13
12. Declaration	13
13. Resources	14
14. Contacts	14
Program enquiries	14
Application enquiries (SmartyGrants)	14
Provision and planning support	15

1. Introduction

The Greener Government School Buildings (GGSB) program aims to contribute to the *Victorian Renewable Energy Target and Climate Change Act 2017* greenhouse gas reduction target of net zero emissions by 2045.

The overall program is intended to:

- provide upfront funding for the implementation of energy efficiency infrastructure projects that can meet the program conditions outlined below;
- increase responsible generation and consumption of clean energy;
- provide energy saving measures that will save schools money in the long term;
- increase the value of school assets;
- enable schools to actively contribute to greenhouse gas emissions reduction; and
- link energy efficiency and sustainability program activities with school curriculum and resources.

GGSB is part of the whole-of-government Greener Government Buildings (GGB) program, funded by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), that improves the energy efficiency of existing government buildings to reduce operating costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

Program conditions

IMPORTANT: In keeping with the whole-of-Victorian Government's GGB program, works undertaken through the GGSB program must adhere to the following conditions:

- the cost of the solar power system installed through the GGSB program must be paid back in no more than five years' time; and
 - once payback has been achieved, schools will forego 50 per cent of the ongoing electricity cost savings to Consolidated Revenue (managed by DTF) through a Student Resource Package (SRP) funding reduction.
-

Payback is required to be achieved through the cost savings generated from the solar power system installed through the GGSB program followed by invoices agreed upon with participating schools on an annual basis to facilitate the school payment process. Savings are calculated within the initial on-site assessment, based on electricity generation and consumption modelling.

Once the cost of the solar power system has been paid back, schools then retain 50 per cent of the savings.

Any queries related to the program conditions can be emailed to VSBA.Green.Energy.Programs@education.vic.gov.au for further information or clarification.

Program timelines

GGSB program timeframes are detailed below:

- **25 March 2026**, formal announcement and opening of Round 5.
 - applications close on **1 May 2026**.
- completion of the full assessment and Deed Poll Agreement signing process to occur by late **August 2026**.
- announcement of successful Round 5 schools in **October 2026**.
- successful projects expected to be completed by **June 2027**.

Successful schools are required to engage in the delivery and implementation process to ensure the successful delivery of the solar power systems during the 2026-2027 financial year.

2. Key considerations

- the GGSB program is **NOT a grant** – the solar power system will be paid upfront by the GGSB program and is required to be paid back over 5 years' time from the electricity savings generated, and then 50 per cent of ongoing savings is contributed to Consolidated Revenue;
- following the payback, schools retain the 50 per cent of savings;
- schools participating must adhere to the GGSB program conditions;
- completing the application is an agreement to commit to the GGSB program; and
- the maximum size of a solar power system to be installed under GGSB is 99.9kW.

3. Funding

What will be funded

The GGSB program will be installing solar power systems for Victorian government schools. The amount of solar (that is, the capacity of the systems) will be determined by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) as part of the assessment process outlined below and will be dependent on the feasibility and suitability of school buildings, together with considerations on electricity consumption, costs, meeting the conditions of the GGSB Program, and distributing available funding across schools.

All solar panel and inverter modules and all installers performing works are Clean Energy Council accredited to ensure safety and compliance with Australian standards.

What will not be funded

Solar power systems will **not** be installed under the following conditions:

- building/s with suitably sized roof/s that are identified as over-entitled;
- building/s with suitably sized roof/s that are in an inadequate condition or are known to have latent conditions present (such as asbestos) therefore requiring further works beyond GGSB capacities;
- building/s with suitably sized roof/s that have a compromised structure or roof leaks that would affect the installation of solar;
- building/s with suitably sized roof/s that are unable to receive sufficient sunlight due to the angle of the roof tilt and/or building orientation (e.g. predominantly facing south), or shade from other elements (e.g. buildings, trees, air conditioning units);
- building/s that are expected to be deconstructed or replaced in the near future whether confirmed or planned;
- building/s that are expected to undergo significant works that would affect the installation of solar (e.g. roof replacement, Main Switch Board replacement);
- building/s that are not permanent structures; or
- building/s built in the last 12 months will not be considered until the Defect Liability Period expires.

The following will also **not** be funded under the GGSB program:

- systems over 99.9kW, as they would be deemed a power station;
- battery storage for renewable energy;
- previously installed, procured solar power systems, or related modules;

- roof or structural works;
- updating, moving, or changing switchboards; or
- works conducted for other renewable energy sources, such as wind, hydro, geothermal, etc.

School financial contributions

Some schools may wish to contribute funding to the project to reduce the overall payback and SRP reduction amount.

During the application process, schools will be asked if they would like to contribute to the project and how much of a contribution is to be considered.

The on-site assessment will evaluate the feasibility of solar at the school and determine the location and capacity of the solar power system in adherence to the GGSB conditions. If a school financial contribution is to be considered, additional solar can be evaluated but will not form part of the payback or SRP reduction amounts.

This process allows schools to gain the benefit of the GGSB program management and benefit from additional solar, effectively allowing the school to achieve greater savings on electricity bills and greenhouse gas emissions.

Schools can contribute funding for up to 94.9kW of the project recommendation (with the remaining 5kW reserved for GGSB compliance), depending on feasibility. If schools are providing funding contributions for the solar installation, the Department of Education (DE) will coordinate and manage the works, with the installation reviewed and audited along the way to ensure compliance with technical specifications and safety requirements. The payback amount and SRP reduction will be reflective of the amount funded by the GGSB program.

Please note that schools are not to use equity funding for any project contribution amount.

Schools should be maintained in an appropriate condition before funding is used for new facilities.

Schools must transfer 100 per cent of contributions to VSBA before the project commences. The VSBA then manages the full project, including the payment of contracts with suppliers.

4. Financial conditions

As per the Program Conditions, the cost of the system must be paid back to DE in no more than 5 years. Payback of the system is aimed to be conducted through the savings generated from the installed solar power system.

DE will work with its suppliers to calculate payback and work with schools to interpret the calculations.

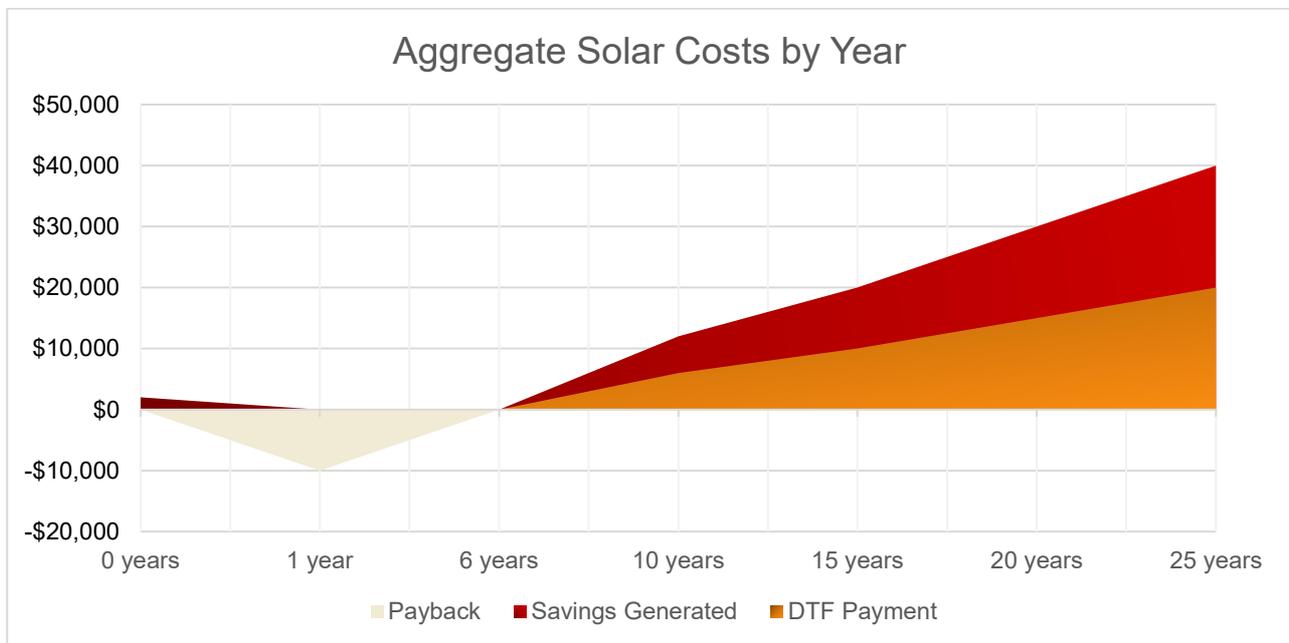
Figure 1 below is a visual representation of how payback functions under the GGSB program:

- **Payback:** participating schools are to repay the upfront initial investment during a period of five years, based on savings generated from reduced electricity bills. DE will agree with participating schools on the amount to be paid through a deed agreement. DE will issue annual invoices based on the agreement set before commencing works.
- **Savings Generated:** once payback has been achieved, schools will then benefit from the electricity savings generated.
- **DTP Payment:** after payback, schools are required to provide 50 per cent of the ongoing electricity cost savings to Consolidated Revenue via an adjustment to SRP utilities funding. The ongoing saving figure is calculated at the onset of the project as an annual estimate and does not change throughout the life of the project. Although it is expected that the obtained savings will continue increasing as inflation and cost of electricity increases, the shared savings amount remains unchanged.

Once an on-site assessment has been completed, the VSBA will work with each school to agree on a schedule to pay back to DE the costs of the installation over 5 years, and for the on-going 50 per cent of savings to be retained by Consolidated Revenue through an SRP reduction.

The payback amount and ongoing payment will be based on the savings expected to be achieved by the school each year, as determined from the installer's on-site assessment and desktop analysis of electrical costs. Considerations will be included for natural deterioration in system performance and for seasonal performance.

Figure 1: Payback



Using the example in Figure 1, the system costs \$10,000, and the amount to be repaid for each of the 5 years is \$2,000. The first year is provided as a grace period to finalise the installation and gain optimal performance. Therefore, in the following 5 years, the cost of the system is returned. Once payback is achieved, the system continues to generate \$2,000 worth of savings each year for the school to benefit; 50 per cent of the savings (\$1,000) will be reduced from the SRP utilities funding as the school still benefits from \$2,000 of savings and does not need to pay as much for their electricity bills to require the full original SRP funding amount.

Please note that the figures provided in the above scenario are examples only and are not reflective of the actual amounts for the cost of the system or savings.

The savings figure is conservative in nature, calculated with zero export to the grid and reduced solar irradiance as a safety factor. DE will assist in monitoring the performance of the system and if any major operating issues occur, DE will review the performance and advise of any adjustments to the agreed-upon figures if required.

As all payback and savings figures are assessed with zero export considered, if your local Distributed Network Service Provider (DNSP) grants export for the solar power system, your school would be granted credits for any electricity fed back into the grid. The amount of credit will be dependent on the export limitation amount and requirements as set out by the DNSP and/or the electricity retailer.

After the assessment and site inspection, confirmation of the proposed system details, costs and timing of payments will be provided in a Deed Poll Agreement to the nominated school contact. The agreement sets out the amounts and schedule for when payments will be undertaken.

Please note that the individuals listed on the commitment deed poll agreement are not personally liable for the payback, DE simply requires the name of the School Council President and a witness. The school will remain liable as an entity.

5. Evaluation process

The VSBA will:

1. Assess applications for eligibility as per the Eligibility Criteria.
2. Assess eligible applications for merit against the Prioritisation Criteria.
3. Assess eligible applications for suitability against the Suitability Criteria, both through desktop assessment and on-site assessments.

As part of the assessment process, other areas of DE will be consulted to further inform the suitability of projects against the criteria.

Schools may receive a phone call during the assessment or evaluation process to clarify details. This call may be from the VSBA or a GGSB panel member performing the on-site assessment.

Eligibility criteria

The GGSB program is open to all Victorian government schools.

The application must demonstrate that:

- the applicant organisation is a government school registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA); and
- where a school operates on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) site, the relevant PPP organisation has been informed and is supportive of the application;
- the application was received during the application period;
- provide relevant contact details for the application, including the principal's contact details and key contact details for the project (if different from the principal);
- agree to provide access to VSBA representatives for non-operating or reduced school times (such as school holidays, weekends, curriculum days);
- the school commits to repaying the cost of installation over 5 years by signing the Commitment 7. Commitment deed poll agreement;
- once payback has been achieved, contribute 50 per cent of the ongoing electricity cost savings to Consolidated Revenue, in adherence to the Program Conditions.

If your application is unable to demonstrate compliance with ALL eligibility criteria, the application may be ruled ineligible.

Submission of an application does not guarantee that your school will proceed under GGSB.

Prioritisation criteria

Applications will be prioritised based on the following considerations:

- a commitment to sustainability – schools that can demonstrate prior or planned commitments to environmental sustainability practices and initiatives; for example, demonstrating participation in the ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) program and School Water Efficiency Program Victorian government programs; and
- a commitment to maintaining the school – before submitting their application, schools must ensure there are no overdue work-orders in the 'routine maintenance' and 'condition based maintenance' tabs of the Facilities Management application on DE's [Asset Information Management System \(AIMS\)](#).

Suitability criteria

Schools must be deemed suitable through a desktop assessment and on-site assessment.

Suitability is initially determined by:

- schools that can demonstrate they have permanent buildings in good condition;
- schools with no significant maintenance or building works underway, scheduled, or planned that could impact feasibility of solar power system installation works; and
- schools provide appropriate energy use information to determine a suitable solar power system.

The on-site assessment is required to confirm project feasibility and includes:

- assessment of the feasibility and suitability of a solar power system;
- assessment of buildings for solar (note that due to the technical nature of solar power systems, suggestions from schools on the proposed buildings might not be adopted);
- structural/electrical certifications, where necessary;
- a report providing the proposed solar power system that will provide:
 - a proposed drawing of the layout of the panels on the selected building(s);
 - the technical specifications of the proposed solar power system; and
 - an analysis of the electricity usage, costs, savings, and payback confirmation.

An on-site assessment will be conducted by professionally qualified structural and electrical engineers and solar installers. The specialist knowledge of the engineers will form the determination for the final proposed system with relevant considerations on the solar power system requirements. Where available, DE requests schools to provide structural or electrical drawings to installers upon request.

DE will request schools and School Councils to sign a commitment deed poll agreement confirming project feasibility and school's agreement before recommending feasible projects to the Minister of Education.

Recommended projects

The VSBA will provide a list of recommended projects to the Minister for Education for approval. The Minister makes the final determination with respect to the participation of schools in the GGSB program.

The recommended projects will be announced by the Minister for Education through a media release. From this point, the VSBA will be in contact with your school to begin coordinating works.

All applicants will be contacted upon the outcome of their applications. Successful projects will be published on the VSBA website.

6. On-site assessment and feasibility

Schools with eligible applications will be contacted to allow qualified electricians to enter your school site. The electricians are to conduct an on-site assessment to determine the feasibility and suitability of your school's electrical system and building structures for a solar power system.

It is important to note that an on-site assessment is not a guarantee that a project will proceed.

A solar power system is a complex electrical system and requires certain conditions to be met before a school may be deemed suitable to participate in the GGSB program. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- electrical mains switchboard capable of connecting with additional systems;
- available suitable roof area;
- suitable building orientation (schools are welcome to pre-identify suitable buildings);
- suitable roof angle, pitch, or tilt;
- permanency of building;
- roof free of significant overshadowing from other structures or objects (e.g. trees).

These factors determine the feasibility of a solar power system and will be determined during the on-site assessment process for relevant applicants.

Assessment outcomes

The Department will evaluate and review the on-site assessments to confirm feasibility and suitability of solar installations at your school. The outcomes will also indicate the savings to be expected with the recommended system.

All figures will also consider any school financial contributions to the project, where savings, costs and other figures will be outlined where a project contribution is provided, including where the solar power system is expanded or where a school may fund the project but have the VSBA manage the installation.

Where an on-site assessment determines that a school is not able to have a solar power system installed (e.g. no suitable buildings or if there is no roof space available), the school will be deemed not feasible to proceed with the solar installation under GGSB.

7. Commitment deed poll agreement

Following the eligibility, prioritisation, and suitability assessments, the VSBA may contact your school to have a deed poll agreement completed to confirm the costs of the projects, the payback over 5 years, and the SRP reduction thereafter. These figures will also take into consideration any school financial contribution.

Schools will be required to complete this Agreement in a 4-week period to ensure that works are able to proceed without delay. Upon receipt of the signed Agreement, schools will be accountable for their commitment, as the Department will establish relevant agreements with DTP and enter into commercial relations to deliver the GGSB program works at your school. If the Commitment Deed Poll Agreement is not returned and signed in a timely manner, participation in the program will not proceed.

8. Applications

Lodging applications

Applications:

- are made online through the SmartyGrants system at www.vsba.smartygrants.com.au (please note that the platform that suits this application process happens to be named SmartyGrants, however, GGSB is NOT offering grants);
- can be changed any time up until you submit your application; and
- must have all required sections of the application form completed to be considered.

Additionally, schools are required to submit a separate application for each campus.

We also recommended that you discuss your application with your regional office before submitting it.

Applications close at midnight on 1 May 2026. Late applications will not be considered.

Application required information

You **MUST** supply the following to address the assessment criteria as part of the application process and to complete all sections in the application form.

Eligibility – School contact details

The application must provide:

- applicant details and contact information;
- school principal details and contact information (if different to the applicant);
- project key contact details and contact information (if different to the applicant and principal).

- The school must also agree to providing access to VSBA representatives for non-operating or reduced school times (such as school holidays, weekends, curriculum days).
- This information will provide points of contact for the VSBA and will be shared with the relevant GGSB Panel Member for scheduling the on-site assessment and arranging works.
- For schools located on PPP sites, confirmation that the relevant PPP organisation has been informed and supportive of the application.

Eligibility – Program Conditions

The application must provide:

- acceptance of the GGSB Program Conditions.

Prioritisation – Sustainability Commitments

The application must provide:

- a written statement of up to 300 words demonstrating any ongoing or planned commitments to environmental sustainability practices including proof of endorsed plans by the school council or evidence of achievements.
- applicant evidence of participation or involvement in environmental sustainability initiatives, such as the ResourceSmart Schools program and School Water Efficiency Program Victorian government programs.

Prioritisation – Maintenance Commitments

Before submitting an application, the school must ensure:

- there are no overdue work-orders in the 'routine maintenance' and 'condition based maintenance' tabs of the Facilities Management application on AIMS (please note the VSBA will review AIMS during the evaluation process of all applications).

If you require assistance in changing the status of specific work-orders to 'FINCOMP' (to mark maintenance activities as completed), or to reschedule work-orders to a more convenient time for the school, please contact the School Maintenance Plan (SMP) Unit on (03) 7022 2212 or email

VSBA.Maintenance.Plan@education.vic.gov.au.

Suitability – Construction Information

The application must provide:

- Details of any and all construction works (underway, scheduled or planned) at the school, including a description of the works, the building(s) affected, and the timeframe of when the works begin and end.

In the case of upcoming scheduled building works, a solar power system will not be funded on a building that is scheduled for demolition or is to be replaced. This is due to a solar power system requiring integrated electrical wiring and depending on the roof tilt or orientation, solar panels may require a mounting system to be installed on the roof. A solar power system is a long-term investment and is best installed as a permanent fixture to a permanent building.

Information regarding upcoming building works and pre-existing solar power systems will be utilised by VSBA's Panel Members (who will be designing and constructing the works) to assess the suitability and compatibility of existing and additional systems.

Suitability – Power/Energy

The application must provide:

- Copies of the 2 most recent electricity bills in PDF format (preferably a digital PDF version although a scanned PDF is acceptable).

- Technical specifications and drawings of any pre-existing solar power system (if available).

This information will be used to validate financial and electrical details in order to provide an accurate analysis of financial estimates for the payback and savings amounts.

School Financial Contribution

The application must provide:

- an indication as to whether the school is willing to financially contribute to the project;
- an indication of the dollar amount that the school is able to contribute to the project.

This information will help in assessing the viability of solar power system proposals and in many circumstances may allow your school to benefit from a larger solar power system, allowing for greater overall benefit in reduced operating costs and abating greenhouse gases.

Application ineligibility

The VSBA will review all applications and if an application is deemed to not be able to proceed for any of the below reasons, then that application will be deemed ineligible.

- application is not complete;
- applicant did not agree to the GGSB Program Conditions;
- significant building works are underway, scheduled or planned, that will impact the feasibility of installing solar;
- Non-government schools.

9. Delivery

All solar installations are expected to be complete by June 2027, pending any delays affecting the installation of the solar power system.

Project management

Schools will not need to manage any of the work being undertaken. The procurement, project management, compliance, and risk management will be coordinated by the VSBA, in consultation with schools.

The VSBA and GGSB panel members will liaise with your school to schedule on-site assessments and coordinate installation times. The Department asks that schools provide access where and when required. The installers may also elect to conduct work on weekends, school holidays, or other times outside of ordinary school times.

Some school projects may require an average period of 3 months to receive approvals from the relevant electrical authorities before commencing works.

The VSBA's Sustainability and Environment Unit (SEU) will be your point of contact in relation to the program and throughout the program. SEU may be contacted via email at VSBA.Green.Energy.Programs@education.vic.gov.au.

Installers

All suppliers, installers, and related personnel are Clean Energy Council accredited and adhere to works in accordance with the Department's policies and Australian Standards for compliance.

Your school will be contacted by the installers to arrange on-site assessments and coordinate installations.

All personnel attending a school under the GGSB program are required to have:

- A current and valid Working With Children Check;

- Working at Heights certification (where applicable);
- Electrical license (where applicable);
- All personnel are to bring with them relevant Personal Protective Equipment, tools, and equipment (such as ladders and harnesses).

All parties to the program may be required to provide COVID-safe plans and adhere to COVID-safe practices throughout any and all interactions with the school.

Additional works

Where unforeseen circumstances or latent conditions arise causing the project to incur additional costs beyond the available budget, unfortunately no additional funding within the program is available. In these circumstances, the VSBA will work with schools to ensure that the best outcome is achieved.

Post-installation

Once the solar power system has been installed, the installer will conduct final safety checks before an independent audit organised by the VSBA is conducted.

The audit will review the workmanship and compliance of the installation and highlight any issues for the installer to address under the defect liability period.

Following the successful installation and energization of the solar power system, your school will be provided with a post-installation pack containing technical specifications, details, certificates, warranties, and log-in information for the monitoring of the solar power system.

10. Privacy

The information you provide will be dealt with in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973* and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*.

11. Events

Successful schools may be contacted by the VSBA communications team to arrange an event to celebrate its sustainability initiatives, participation in the GGSB program, or as part of a project milestone (such as the project reaching completion).

12. Declaration

By submitting your SmartyGrants application, you agree to the following terms and conditions.

The school accepts the terms and conditions described in the Program Guidelines.

I confirm that:

- *I am either the Principal of the school where the proposed project would take place, or I have received the authority of the Principal to submit this application on their behalf; and*
- *the School Council (and school council president) has been consulted and is supportive of this application and program conditions.*

I state:

- *that the information in this application and attachments is, to the best of my knowledge, true and correct; and*
- *I will notify the VSBA of any changes to this information and any circumstances that may affect this application, including any changes to the scope of works and contact details for the project.*

I consent to the VSBA:

- referring this application to other areas within DE for advice on alignment with program principles, compliance with regulatory requirements, and potential risks and issues; and
- referring this application to external experts or other government departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities.

I understand that:

- the Greener Government School Buildings program is **not a grant**;
- the personal information collected through this application will be managed in accordance with DE privacy policies;
- the VSBA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 and that if a Freedom of Information request is made, the VSBA will consult with the applicant before any decision is made to release the application or supporting documentation;
- this is an application only and may not necessarily result in project approval;
- an on-site assessment may not necessarily result in project approval;
- in submitting this application, I am agreeing to all terms and conditions set out in the Guidelines and in particular:
 - to hold milestone events on request from DE;
 - that my school has not entered into and will not enter into a construction contract for any works proposed in this application prior to being informed of the application outcome; and
 - the project is expected to be completed by June 2027.

13. Resources

The following links are provided to expand in other related details.

- [Victorian School Building Authority website](#)
- [Greener Government School Buildings website](#)
- [Sustainable and Climate Resilient Facilities policy](#)
- [School-funded Capital Projects](#)
- [Procurement — Schools policy](#)
- [Procuring Low-value Construction Works or Services](#)

14. Contacts

If you have any questions about the program, conditions, eligibility or require further information, the VSBA's Sustainability and Environment Unit are available to provide support.

Program enquiries

Victorian School Building Authority

Sustainability and Environment Unit

VSBA.Green.Energy.Programs@education.vic.gov.au

Application enquiries (SmartyGrants)

SmartyGrants Service Team

service@smartygrants.com.au

03 9320 6888

Provision and planning support

Your region's provision and planning staff are available to support your application.

Region	Provision & Planning Manager	Email	Phone
North Eastern Victoria	Damien Hanwright	Damien.Hanwright@education.vic.gov.au	7022 1172
North Western Victoria	Jeanette Stubbs	Jeanette.Stubbs@education.vic.gov.au	8468 9224
South Western Victoria	Kimberley Bendall	Kimberley.Bendall@education.vic.gov.au	9194 6305
South Eastern Victoria	Darren Clarke	Darren.Clarke@education.vic.gov.au	8904 2559