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**MEDIA RELEASE | Wednesday, 26 November 2014**

**AEU WELCOMES LABOR ANNOUNCEMENT TO REMOVE ASBESTOS IN SCHOOLS**

The Australian Education Union Victorian Branch has welcomed Labor’s important announcement to safely remove all asbestos from public schools by 2020.

Meredith Peace, AEU Branch President said the commitment will ensure Victorian children and school staff will be able to learn and teach in a healthy and safe environment free from asbestos.

“An additional commitment to provide an extra $100 million to escalate the identification and removal of asbestos in the short term will mean that some of the worst affected buildings, classrooms and portables will be made safer sooner.

“This week is Asbestos Awareness Week. The AEU has been calling on the government for over 12 months to put in place a plan to remove asbestos from our schools. We made a further plea to major parties after the recently released State Government audit found over 300 Victorian schools were plagued with asbestos.

“It is unacceptable that the Napthine government has kept this information hidden during an election year, especially given the threat asbestos poses to health and safety.

“Asbestos is a dangerous material and its safe removal should be a number one priority in ensuring our children, families and school communities are safe.

“Labor’s announcement today demonstrates that they are listening to parents, teachers, principals and support staff and committing to tackling the problem.

“State governments must take responsibility for the safety of our community, and not expect school principals and staff to bear the weight of this responsibility alone.

"Every Victorian child deserves access to education in up-to-date and safe buildings. Most important is the assurance that students and teachers' health and safety is at the forefront of the government's mind.

"We welcome this commitment by the Labor Party, and believe they have given voters a real choice for putting education first in Saturday’s election,” said Ms Peace.

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