

\$5.5m upgrade plan



Warrnambool Primary School principal Peter Auchettl (left) shows plans to Opposition education spokesman Martin Dixon and Member for South West Coast Denis Napthine.

090319GW24 Picture: GLEN WATSON

By ALEX SINNOTT

WARRNAMBOOL'S oldest school has unveiled a grand modern design to bring its ageing facilities into the new century.

Warrnambool Primary School is hoping to get \$2.5 million in State Government funding to bankroll its \$5.5 million redevelopment project. It is also planning to apply for \$3 million from the Federal Government under its capital works stimulus package.

Principal Peter Auchettl said the project would breathe new life into the centrally located school, replacing its outdated library and some classrooms.

Modern two-storey design

"The school council have been very keen on this project for a number of years now and if we do get the State Government on board it will mean a transformation in the way we operate," he said.

"The design of the project is exceptional and is tailor-made to what we need here."

The two-storey design features eight classrooms, four small staff areas, a raised seating area, a computer lab, toilets, six break-out rooms and a 400-square-

metre outdoor courtyard. The building's roof will be covered by a grassed recreational area replacing the school's asphalt courtyard.

Mr Auchettl said the proposed facilities would be available to community organisations after school.

"Being in central Warrnambool, lots of community groups I'm sure would be interested in using the facilities, so it's not just a Warrnambool Primary project, it's a community project," he said.

The proposed complex would replace two portable class buildings and a library built in 1955 which were last refurbished in the mid-1960s.

South West Coast MP Denis Napthine said the State Government needed to look at the circumstances of specific schools before allocating capital works funding.

"I would hope the (State) Minister for Education (Bronwyn Pike) takes the opportunity to look over this design and give

financial backing to what is one of the largest primary schools in the region," he said.

"They need to take a commonsense approach. "I'm impressed by what the Warrnambool Primary School have done here and it would be a shame if the Government took a one-size-fits-all to building classrooms here."

Designer Dean Picken said the new complex would eradicate much of the drab asphalt courtyard located at the back of the historic school building.

"There's a lot of raw asphalt area and not enough green space," Mr Picken said.

School needs ignite debate

MILLIONS of dollars in building upgrades are needed to keep south-west schools operating, Opposition Education spokesman Martin Dixon said.

After he visited the region yesterday, Mr Dixon said there were several primary and secondary schools across the south-west in need of refurbishment.

He said Warrnambool schools were under-funded by the State Government by \$1.5 million and Portland schools faced a similar monetary shortfall of \$1.2 million.

"A well maintained school provides a safe learning and working environment, a positive educational atmosphere and a perception that the school cares for its students," he said.

Mr Dixon said the Auditor-General's report *School Buildings: Planning, Maintenance and Renewal* was highly critical of the Brumby Government's failure to maintain schools.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike said the State Government was currently undertaking the biggest school rebuilding program in Victoria's history, with every government school rebuilt, renovated or extended as part of the plan.