

28/07/2020

Derelict Yarralumla Public School - Google Docs

[REDACTED]

30 June 2019

Dear Sir,

Yarralumla Public School is in seriously derelict state and is a danger to students' health and safety. It appears this school was built in 1957, now in 2019 we see young children exposed to:


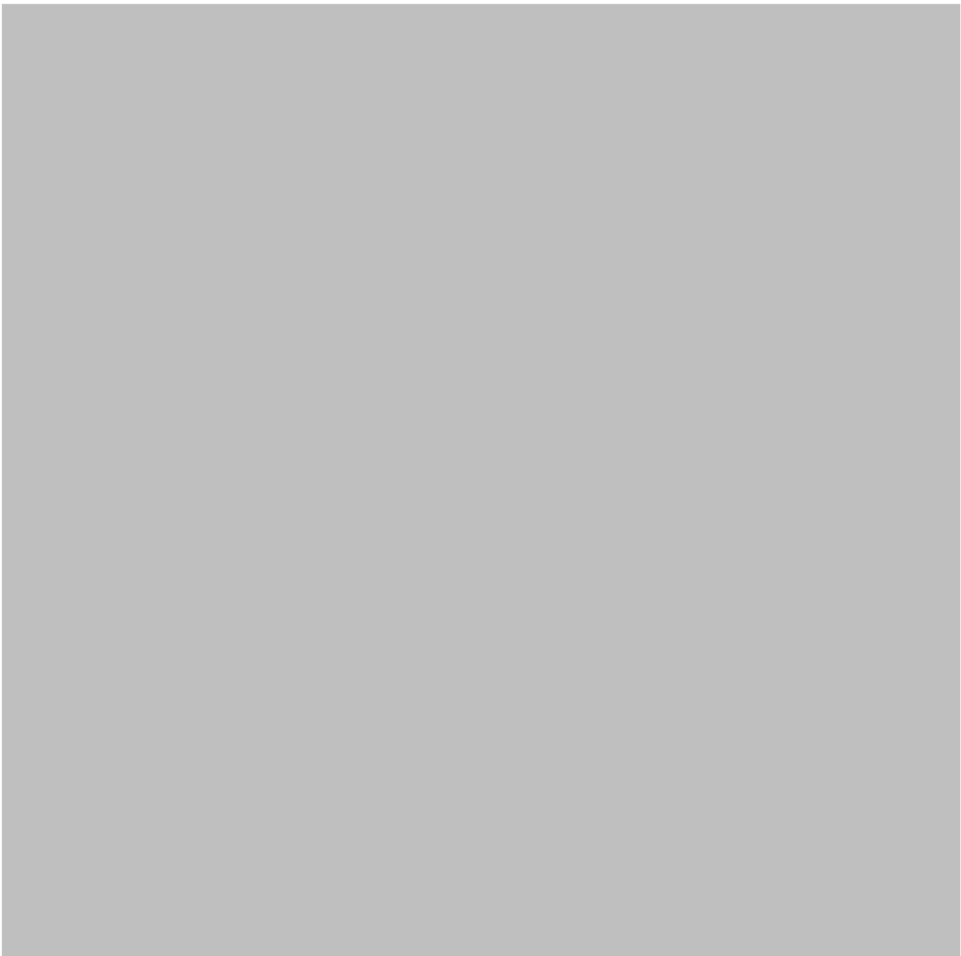
1. **Lead Paint** chipping and flaking off decades old external wood boards, window sills, eaves and sagging / broken gutters in the immediate play areas;
2. **Exposed Asbestos** in preschool bathroom;

- [REDACTED]
5. Impending **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)** to pollute indoor air quality with scheduled interior painting;
- [REDACTED]

I have raised a number of these concerns first with the Deputy Principal, Debra Sayers, and recently Principal, Rohan Evans.

In the last 3 weeks the Principal has addressed some of my concerns by:

- having tiles put over the exposed asbestos in the children's bathroom (However, there has been **no communication with parents about potential risks** from the previous 6 months exposure and what if any health concerns we need to be aware of);
 - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

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- scheduling painting of some external areas showing serious dilapidation and **flaking off lead paint** (Again however, there has been **no communication with parents about the safety aspects relating to the dangerous lead paint situation** and how it will be remediated. Will there be testing and remediation of the surrounding soils? What about sanding down the flaky lead paint into the soil before repainting which will cause more disturbance of the lead paint, how will additional lead dust removal be managed? - Note, since I originally drafted this letter on 23 June I have discovered there has been a lead paint survey and report done which parents have not been notified about, see below for more information.)
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VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS

[REDACTED] wrote to the Principal on June 18th to request a delay in the repainting of the interior preschool until the end of year break instead of the upcoming school holidays when the building can be thoroughly aired out for a significant period of time. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are harmful carbon-based chemicals found in paint that easily evaporate at room temperature. VOCs strongly affect indoor air quality and are known to have respiratory, allergic and immune effects in infants, children and adults. Children and those with weakened immune systems, including autoimmune diseases, are most vulnerable to immunotoxic effects from VOCs. Please see scientific information via these links:

1. https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/volatile-organic-compounds-impact-indoor-air-quality#Health_Effects
2. <https://soe.environment.gov.au/theme/ambient-air-quality/topic/2016/volatile-organic-compounds>
 - a. Breathing **low levels** of VOCs for long periods of time may increase some people's risk of health problems. Several studies suggest that exposure to VOCs may make symptoms worse in people who have asthma or are particularly sensitive to chemicals. VOCs particularly affect indoor air quality—concentrations of many VOCs are consistently higher indoors (up to 10 times higher) than outdoors.
3. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/volatile-organic-compounds/>
4. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0269749114003121>
5. <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2004/08/27/1185749.htm?site=science/talkingscience&topic=latest&listaction=unsubscribe>

- o *Chemicals given off by household products may increase the risk of childhood asthma, a new Australian study has found, prompting questions about the adequacy of existing guidelines for indoor air quality. A team including Dr Krassi Rumchev of Perth's Curtin University of Technology reports its study on the association between volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and asthma in toddlers in the September issue of the journal Thorax. "Our study supports the hypothesis that indoor environmental factors increase the risk of asthma, especially VOCs," Rumchev told ABC Science Online. The researchers found that toddlers with asthma were exposed to higher levels of VOCs, which are known irritants.*

6. **Low-VOC or Zero-VOC paints can still be of concern when:**

- A. Paint is used in poorly ventilated areas which increases the potential exposure
- B. Paint slowly off gasses from painted surfaces for months to years
- C. Partially used paint in containers stored in garages or basements are a continuous source of VOCs
- D. Arts and crafts paints are often stored with other toys rather than in a more ventilated area away from the children

There is always the potential for chemical exposure, regardless of the type of paint used. **The best measure to reduce exposure for any type of paint is to use as much ventilation as possible when actively painting (e.g., fans, open windows, house ventilation system) and for a few weeks after painting.** The solvent will continue to slowly evaporate for months, or even years, so circulating as much air as possible after the paint is applied will speed up that process and reduce the VOC levels as quickly as possible. Since it's best to paint when you can ventilate as much as possible try to avoid painting when you can't open the windows. Another important feature is to make sure you plan your painting to allow time for the paint to set properly and the residual chemicals to dissipate as much as possible.

On June 25th [redacted] received a reply from the principal saying they would not delay the painting but trust the painters' word that any dangerous fumes would be abated after two days.

LEAD PAINT & ASBESTOS ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD REPORTS

On Wednesday 26 June I went to the preschool office to request a copy of the recently completed Environmental Hazards Report on Lead Paint Asbestos. I was told I couldn't have a copy but I could look at their one. I have also requested a PDF copy of this report by phone and in writing from Access Canberra and am still waiting to receive it.

This report is an extremely worrying indication of the shocking decision making from Yarralumla Public School administration / principal. On Page 8 of the "Lead Paint Assessment T-01035 Yarralumla Primary and Preschool, survey date 23/04/2019" completed by Robson Environmental Pty Ltd we see "Yarralumla Gambarril and Preschool - Exterior window frames and doors" with a Risk Rating Level of HIGH which means "Lead is present in paint that is in very poor condition (i.e. bad cracking, flaking, chalking and peeling observed). It covers a large surface area and/or is on a surface that is easily accessible to children. It may be a health hazard with minor disturbance. Action should be taken immediately to reduce exposure risk." (emphasis mine)

However, nothing has been done since the writing of the report to reduce exposure risk to preschoolers. No areas have been cordoned off and preschoolers continue to play in the immediate area of the broken flaking lead paint chips located in the "Fairly Garden" of the Preschool (this is with full knowledge of the principal, I spoke to him about my concerns on the matter while standing there).

Why has the ACT Education Department and Yarralumla Public School Principal and administration team not chosen to inform parents about the **existence** of this report (I only found out about this via Elizabeth Lee MLA)? Why has the ACT Education Department and Yarralumla Public School administration not chosen to inform parents about the **contents** of this report? Why has the ACT Education Department and Yarralumla Public School Principal and administration team chosen to **not to take immediate action** to cordon off the affected areas to protect children and instead let many months pass since the report was completed as recommended in the report? The area below the preschool exterior windows are a favorite place for children to play hide-and-seek and the children are in this area immediately adjacent to the flaking paint every day roughing around on the ground and in the bushes. The teachers, deputy principal, and principal know they play in this area.

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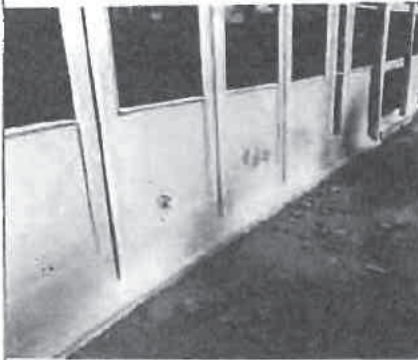
Is the ACT Education Department hiding this situation or are they just negligent? A short Google search will reveal a similar situation at the ANU Heritage Childhood Centre in 2017 (<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6032999/lead-paint-discovered-at-second-anu-campus-childcare-centre-test-results-due-wednesday/>) and the matter was handled with a much greater degree of transparency with parents informed of the lead paint report, the school closed, an environmental hygienist brought in for further testing, and an information evening put on with school administration, health officials, and parents to explain the situation and how, why and when to have children's blood tested for lead (<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6033221/parents-of-children-at-heritage-childcare-centre-should-consider-blood-tests-after-high-lead-levels-discovered/>).

The report identifies the situation of high risk lead paint exposure is the same for the after school care building which is in such a bad state you'd be shocked to see it still in use.

The lead paint chipping off this building is so bad it just blows around everywhere.

One additional point to note in amongst the binder full of environmental reports is that no soil contamination report has been performed. How can this be when children play right in and on the soil below the chipping, flaking lead paint?

Robson
ENVIRONMENTAL

Sample ID	Sample location	Paint Colour	Classified as Lead Paint?	Photograph(s)
Pb11	Yarralumla Primary School Main Building – External windowframes and doors	Grey	No	
2	Yarralumla Gambarril and Preschool – Exterior window frames and doors	White	Yes	

Please note in the photo above of the Yarralumla Gambarril and Preschool Exterior Window Frames and Doors which indicates lead paint present, they have not photographed or tested the window frames on the other side of the preschool where the children actually play in close / immediate proximity to flaking lead paint much worse than this photo, but more like the photo of the after school care building. The Note on the Hazardous Materials Report Introduction reads "Note: It should be assumed that all paints similar in appearance, age and texture to those identified as containing lead compounds contain similar percentages of lead as those identified within this report." This is particularly concerning because the ACT Education

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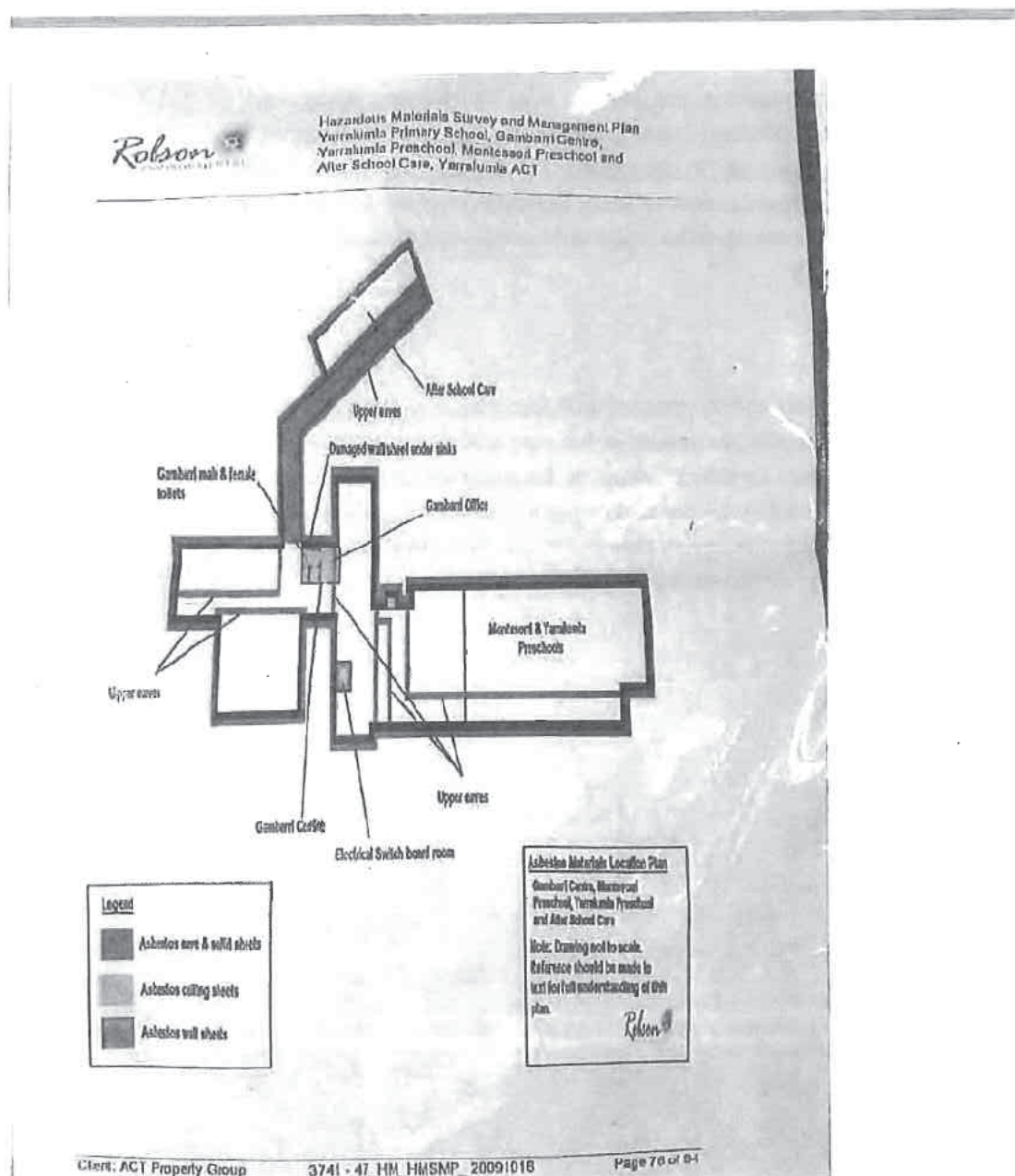
Department and Yarralumla Public School have known about the high levels of lead paint in all these buildings for decades. The last Hazardous Materials Report was done in 2009 and it clearly states the areas are to be well maintained and not allowed to deteriorate. But, in reality Yarralumla Public School has done no maintenance of these buildings or of the school campus in general and the whole place has fallen into dangerous disrepair.

ASBESTOS

The asbestos situation with the Yarralumla Public School is opaque and information is not provided to parents at the start of the year or when considering enrollment for their children. In the preschool kitchen there is posted on a wall a 2009 Asbestos survey highlighting the asbestos all over the Gambari wing and after school care buildings. The eaves and soffits of the Gambari building are made with asbestos. See below:

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In the 2017 Asbestos Survey of Yarralumla Public School we see the Gambarr Centre asbestos is identified as "Chrysotile, Amosite Asbestos", see photo below.

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3 ASBESTOS SURVEY

3.1 Survey Details

The survey included all accessible building areas. Inaccessible areas and limitations are described in Sections 2.2 and Section 2.3 respectively. Robson Environmental Pty Ltd commenced the reinspection of the previously identified ACM on 23/04/2019.

3.2 Survey Methodology

The survey involved a visual inspection and subsequent sampling and analysis of materials in Robson Environmental's NATA accredited laboratory using polarised light microscopy. Samples were a representative selection of materials suspected of containing asbestos. Materials were not sampled from all areas due to the uniformity of the materials used.

3.3 Sample Analysis

Table 2: Mineralogical analysis of samples for asbestos using polarised light microscopy.

After School Care				
Sample Reference	Tracker Location No	Sample Location	Sample Type	Composition
2123-25-7	001	Exterior covered walkway - soffits	Sheet	Removed
02164	002	Main room - light brown flooring (throughout building)	Vinyl floor tile	No Asbestos Detected
P0340	001	Exterior - wall cladding	Sheet	No Asbestos Detected
Garbarril Centre				
Sample Reference	Tracker Location No	Sample Location	Sample Type	Composition
2123-25-8	001	Exterior - eave soffits	Sheet	Chrysotile, Amosite Asbestos Detected
3741-47-A10	001	Exterior - wall cladding	Sheet	No Asbestos Detected
3741-47-A4	002	Ground floor Staff Office - ceiling	Sheet	Chrysotile, Amosite Asbestos Detected
3741-47-A1	003	Ground floor toilets adjacent Staff Office - panel below sinks	Sheet	Removed
3741-47-A5	017	Ground floor Music Room - ceiling to sink alcove	Sheet	Chrysotile, Amosite Asbestos Detected
02148	003	Ground floor toilets adjacent Staff Office - vents	Sheet	Chrysotile Asbestos Detected

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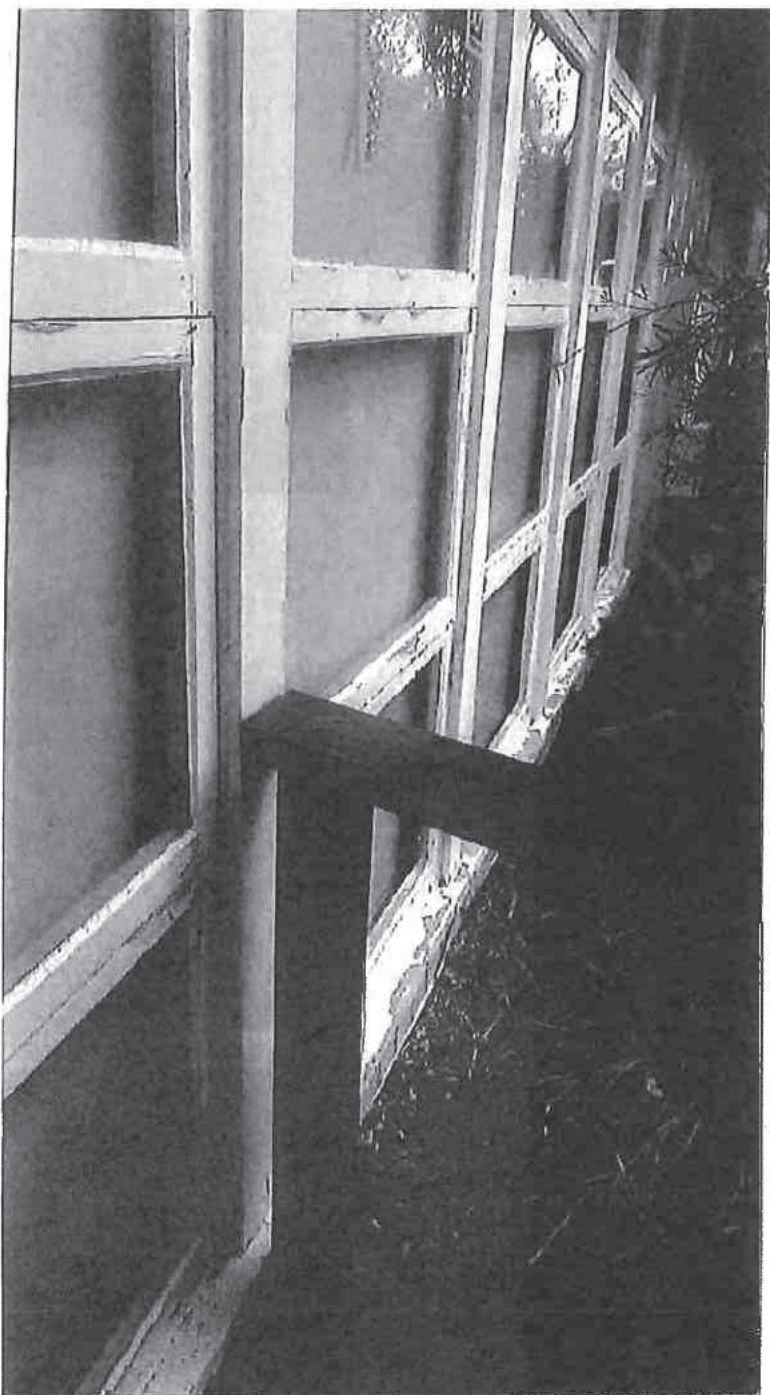
Above: [redacted] elr
[redacted] Exposed wall (asbestos?) where tiles have fallen off under broken, rusty and corroded heater.

Next photos: These windows are flaking off lead paint chips into the popular hide-n-seek play space called "The Fairy Garden". Will lead paint be sanded off here right into the children's play space when the lead paint is painted over? What safety precautions if any will protect the children from exposure to lead? What about worsening soil contamination? From my brief look through the lead paint report I'm not even sure if this area - which is amongst the worst and most heavily used - was in the survey. The pictures they indicate show areas not as bad as this. This is an immediate play area used every day. You

[redacted]

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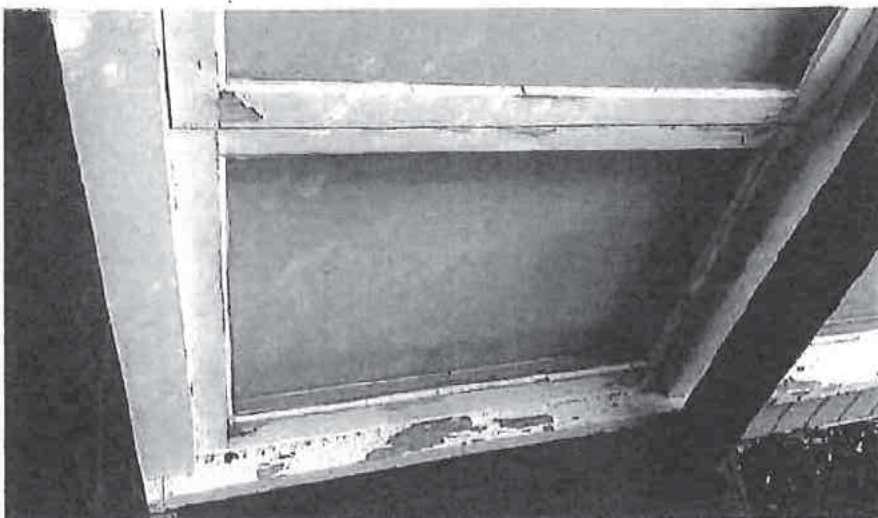
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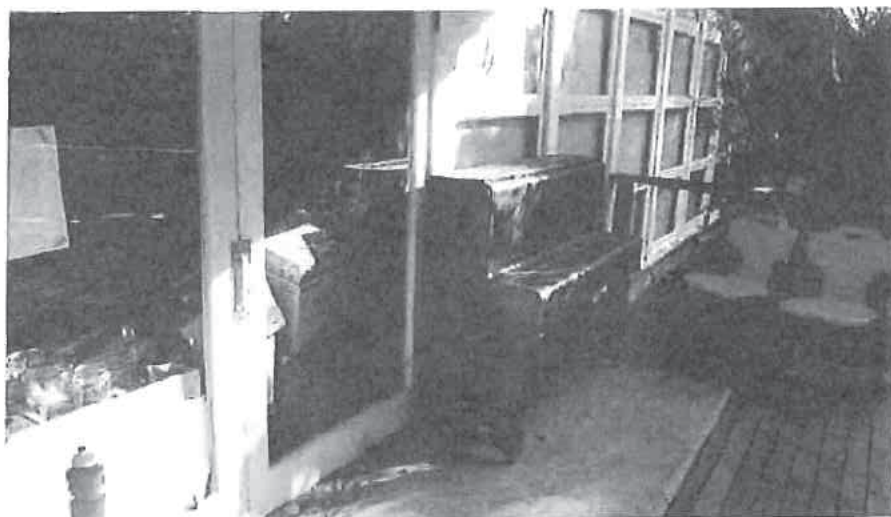
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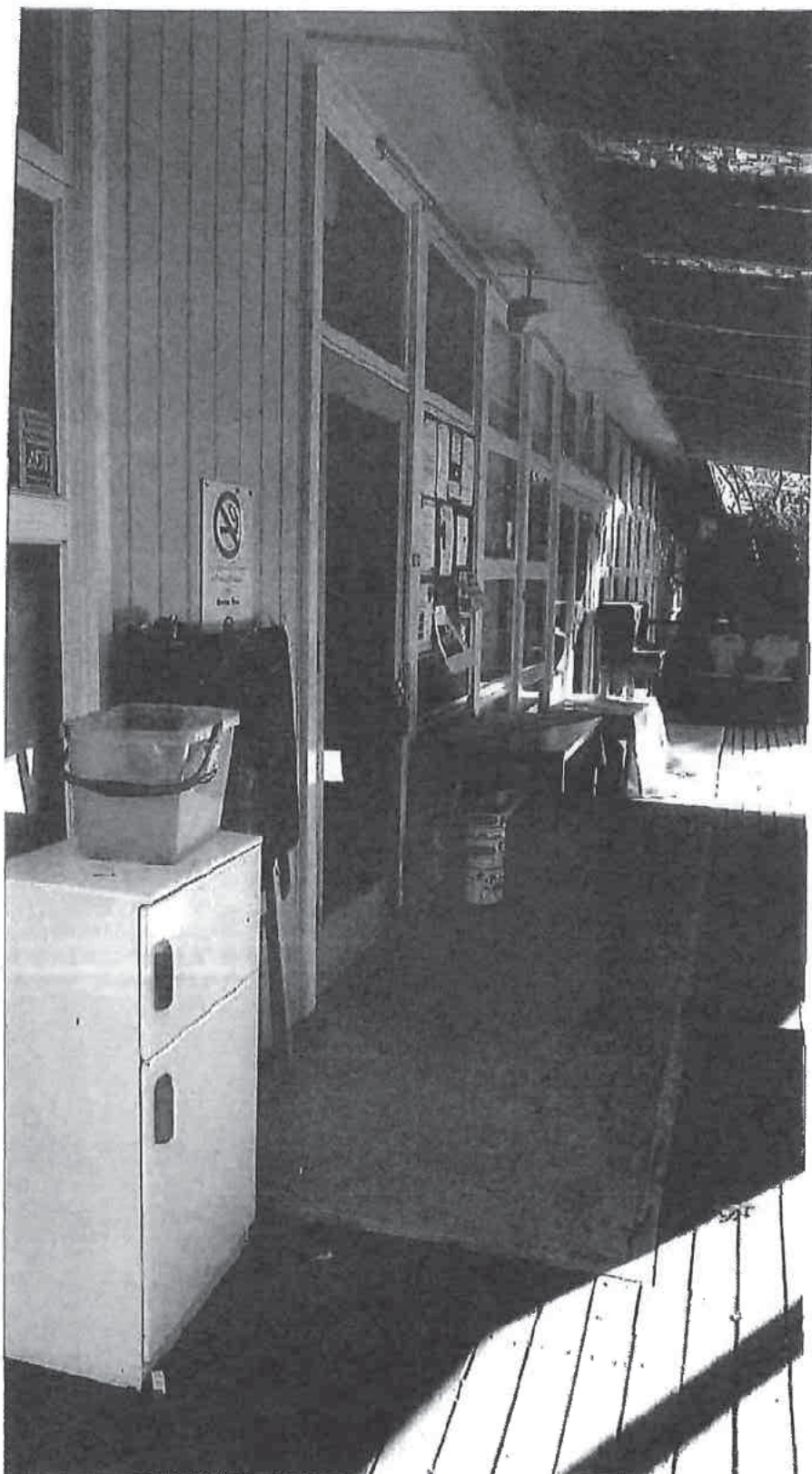
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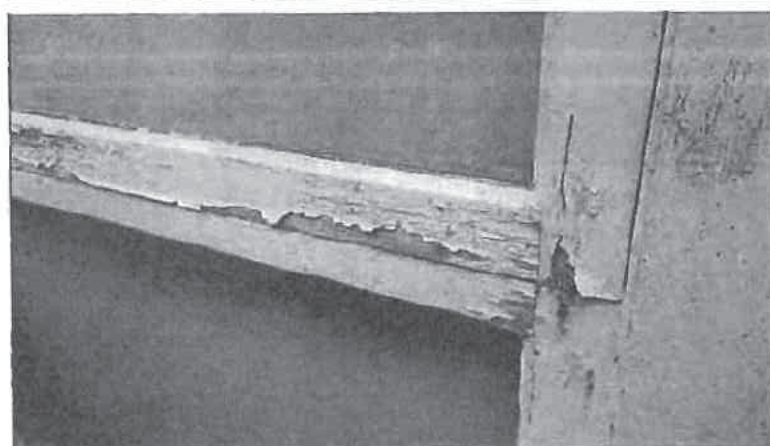
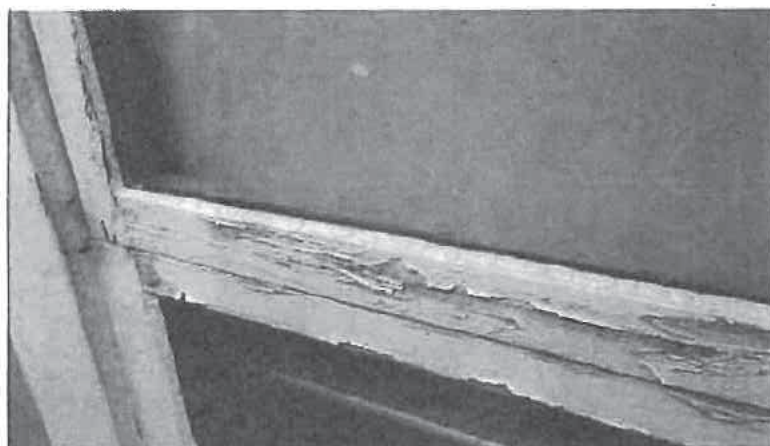
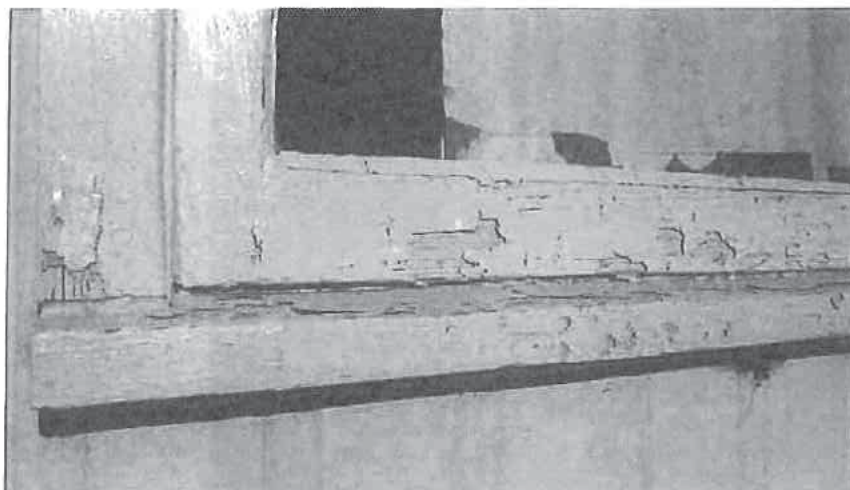
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