

INDEPENDENT REVIEW FOOTSCRAY PS

1

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

Grant Rau

Independent Reviewer

The Independent Review and recommendations is a CONFIDENTIAL REPORT. It is the property of the client, Dr. Wendy Timms, Regional Director(RD), South-Western Victoria, Department of Education and Training(DET).

Contractual Arrangements: Independent Review

Scope and timeline: As detailed in 'The Brief' p 3

Acknowledgments: I wish to acknowledge the support provided by key stakeholders

33(1)

33(1), John Stone (Senior Education Improvement Leader, DET) 33(1)

33(1)

Contact information (e-mail): 33(1)

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS	2
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Contents

The Brief	3
Background	4
Methodology	6
Findings	10
Summation and Recommendations	37
Other issues	42
Appendices	44

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

3

The Brief

The Brief provided the framework for the Independent Review. It is included here as the key reference for the work undertaken:

The school council at Footscray Primary School has asked the Department of Education and Training to conduct an independent review into matters at the school.

The terms of reference for the review are:

- *To review the operations of the school council to ensure practice is aligned with Department policy and protocols. Specific issues include school contracts, budget formulation, policy development and management, adherence to standing orders, and behaviour of council members.*
- *To review the current model of educational provision at Footscray Primary School, including the Vietnamese bilingual program with its financial and human resource implications.*

I ask that you undertake this review and provide a report to me by the end of term 1, 2019(Friday, 5 April 2019). Your report should include findings and recommendations(App.1)

The scope and wording of the Review did provide some angst to school community members. I received 3 written submissions and 3 verbal feedback responses which were negative about this.

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

Whilst it was important to focus on the specific opportunity the Review provided, it was also important to address a large number of respondents(20) who provided collaborated evidence(independently witnessed) of other matters of concern. This is included as an “Other” issues section for consideration in the Report.

Background

Footscray Primary School has a long and rich history. Established in 1860, the original school bluestone building from 1881 reflects the important place the school plays within the community. In relation to this Review, according to the My School website:

In 1984 the Vietnamese Bilingual program...began. Footscray has experienced major changes in curriculum, including introducing the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program in 2006, with full authorisation being awarded in October 2009.

30(1), 35(1)(b)

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

5

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

30(1), 35(1)(b)

The Methodology

The Review process consisted of a range of feedback opportunities for school community members, requested responses from key stakeholders and examination of a range of documents deemed relevant to the Review. There is an assumption by the Review that the recently completed School Strategic Plan Review (resulting in a new Strategic Plan for 2018-21), undertaken by a Panel in accordance with DET guidelines, provides the evidence of adherence to the overall expectation of educational provision and VRQA requirements. There is also an assumption that the DET financial audit process, the School Council Financial Audit (SCFA) program, provides the overarching financial accountability compliance. As stated in the DET document, 'Improving School Governance', "The Department conducts risk based financial audits of school councils in line with the requirements of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006." (p20, Finance section). This report does not have the expertise to comment beyond the evidence provided in the audit report of 2012. However, comment will follow on the school council capacity to implement the school council's governance role relating to the SCFA program.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

7

Evidence of the range and breadth of feedback received, verbal and written, is provided in the following table:

Category of respondent	Number
[REDACTED]	30(1)
Key Stakeholders providing requested responses	33(1)
Senior Education Improvement Leader,	33(1)
[REDACTED]	33(1)
	5

There were also a total of 160 documents that were studied for further insights and consideration.

The following table of documents examined is provided:

1. Requested documents:

School Council:

1. School Council minutes for 2018, including SC Finance sub-committee minutes, and also any SC extra-ordinary meeting minutes held in the period to the present date
2. SC Standing Orders and Constituting Order

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

8

3. A copy of the most recent SC Financial Audit (SCFA), 2012. (Schools are, according to the DET School Council training manual, 2016, included in the SCFA program at least once every four years).
4. School Strategic Plan and AIP 2018 and 2019
5. 2018 and 2019 School Council approved Program Budget. A copy of the current SRP

Educational Provision:

1. A copy of VRQA required documents - Curriculum Framework Policy, Communication of School Policies, Procedures and Schedule Policy
2. Relevant Bilingual Policy documents/program discussions, consultations, etc, in relation to the terms of reference.

2. Further Documents provided by Principal:

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

2. School Curriculum schedules, assessment documents and etc.
3. Updated Policies

3. My School Website

4. Footscray Primary School Website

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30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

9 of 25

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

Summation and Recommendations

Throughout the period of review interviews, conversations and observations at the school, I was always encouraged by the willingness of all stakeholders to contribute in a positive way to improve the current climate within the school environment. All stakeholders were polite, honorable in intent and keen to move forward. This is in no place better demonstrated than the comments and behaviours displayed by [REDACTED] 33(1) [REDACTED] 33(1) willing engagement and positive approach provides an encouraging opportunity to facilitate much needed improvement in school climate. The school has undoubtedly been through a period of demographic shift in both student numbers and socio-economic status. [REDACTED] 30(1)

[REDACTED] 30(1)

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

38

30(1)

The following recommendations have considered what is manageable and achievable within the remainder of 2019. This will require a considered and detailed implementation commitment from a range of stakeholders:

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

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30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

12 of 25

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

Appendices

1. Letter of offer to undertake the Independent Review, including Terms of Reference, from Dr. Wendy Timms, Regional Director, South-Western Victoria, DET
2. [REDACTED] 33(1) of Footscray PS, response to Review submission request
3. John Stone, SEIL, meeting with [REDACTED] 33(1), 30(1)
4. Media article, The Star Weekly, December 14, 2018
5. [REDACTED] 35(1)(b), 33(1)
6. [REDACTED] 30(1), 35(1)(b), 33(1) response to Review request submission

The complete file, including all submitted written responses, notes of all verbal feedback provided and a journal of logged activities has been provided to the South-Western Victoria Regional Office, for the perusal of the Regional Director, as the stated client. It has also been

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

43

forwarded to ensure DET guidelines, in relation to confidentiality and storage of such sensitive documents, is implemented.

14/3/2019

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

44

Appendix 1: Letter of Offer to undertake review, 25/1/19, from Dr. Wendy Timms, RD, DET, South-Western Victoria (attached as a document, not in the original pdf format)

Department of Education and Training

South-Western Victoria Region

COR 55019

Regional Enquiries: PO Box 2141 Footscray Victoria 3011 T: 1300 333 232 (03) 8397 0300 F: (03) 8397 0303 E: swvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Mr Grant Rau

Email: [REDACTED] 33(1)

Dear Grant

The [REDACTED] 30(1), 33(1) at Footscray Primary School has asked the Department of Education and Training to conduct an independent review into matters at the school.

The terms of reference for the review are:

To review the operations of the school council to ensure practice is aligned with Department policy and protocols. Specific issues include school contracts, budget formulation, policy development and management, adherence to standing orders, and behaviour of council members.

To review the current model of educational provision at Footscray Primary School, including the Vietnamese bilingual program with its financial and human resource implications.

I ask that you undertake this review and provide a report to me by the end of Term 1, 2019 (Friday, 5 April 2019). Your report should include findings and recommendations.

[REDACTED] 30(1), 33(1) has been informed about your appointment and the terms of reference for the review. The school council is also aware of the review.

[REDACTED] 33(1) 30(1)

Background information about the school may be obtained from:

- Mr John Dainutis, Area Executive Director, Western Melbourne, mobile [REDACTED] 33(1)
- Mr John Stone, Senior Education Improvement Leader, Western Melbourne, mobile [REDACTED] 33(1)

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

45

You are able to obtain information about the Department's policy and requirements about bilingual programs from [REDACTED] 33(1) telephone 7022 [REDACTED] 33(1)

Thank you for your willingness to undertake this review.

Yours sincerely

WT

Dr Wendy Timms Acting Regional Director

25/1 /2019

Cc

Mr John Dainutis Area Executive Director Western Melbourne Mr John Stone, Senior Education Improvement Leader, Western Melbourne [REDACTED] 33(1)

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30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

17 of 25

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

Appendix 4: Media article, Maribyrnong & Hobsons Bay Star Weekly, 14/12/2018

Footscray Primary School scraps west's only bilingual program

DECEMBER 14, 2018 12:25 PM

BY BENJAMIN MILLAR



PARENTS AND PUPILS ARE UPSET AT FOOTSCRAY PRIMARY SCHOOL SCRAPPING ITS VIETNAMESE BILINGUAL PROGRAM. PHOTO BY DAMJAN JANEVSKI.

UPDATED: The west's only bilingual school program may be back next year despite being scrapped by the school.

Footscray Primary School last week wrote to parents announcing the school has not employed enough qualified teachers to staff the Vietnamese bilingual program for 2019.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

59

The letter, from principal Philip Fox, stated that a “number of different options” were being considered in place of the long-running practice of classes being taught in Vietnamese for up to five hours a week.

The immersive language program first faced the axe in 2016 until being saved by a parent-led campaign and intervention by the state education minister.

Star Weekly understands the co-ordinator of the program has taken up a position at another school after learning it would not be continued.

But following outcry from parents and Vietnamese community leaders, the Department of Education and Training has vowed to work with Footscray Primary School to recruit bilingual teachers for 2019.

“While the school is currently experiencing some difficulty staffing their Vietnamese bilingual program, the Footscray community can be assured that the Department will reinstate the program as soon as an appropriate teacher is found,” a spokeswoman said.

“Language and culture are an important part of keeping schools at the heart of communities, and Footscray Primary School is a great example of this.”

Hoang Tran Nguyen, a father of two at the school, said parents had been disappointed by the scrapping.

He said the program was the reason he had decided to enrol his children at the school.

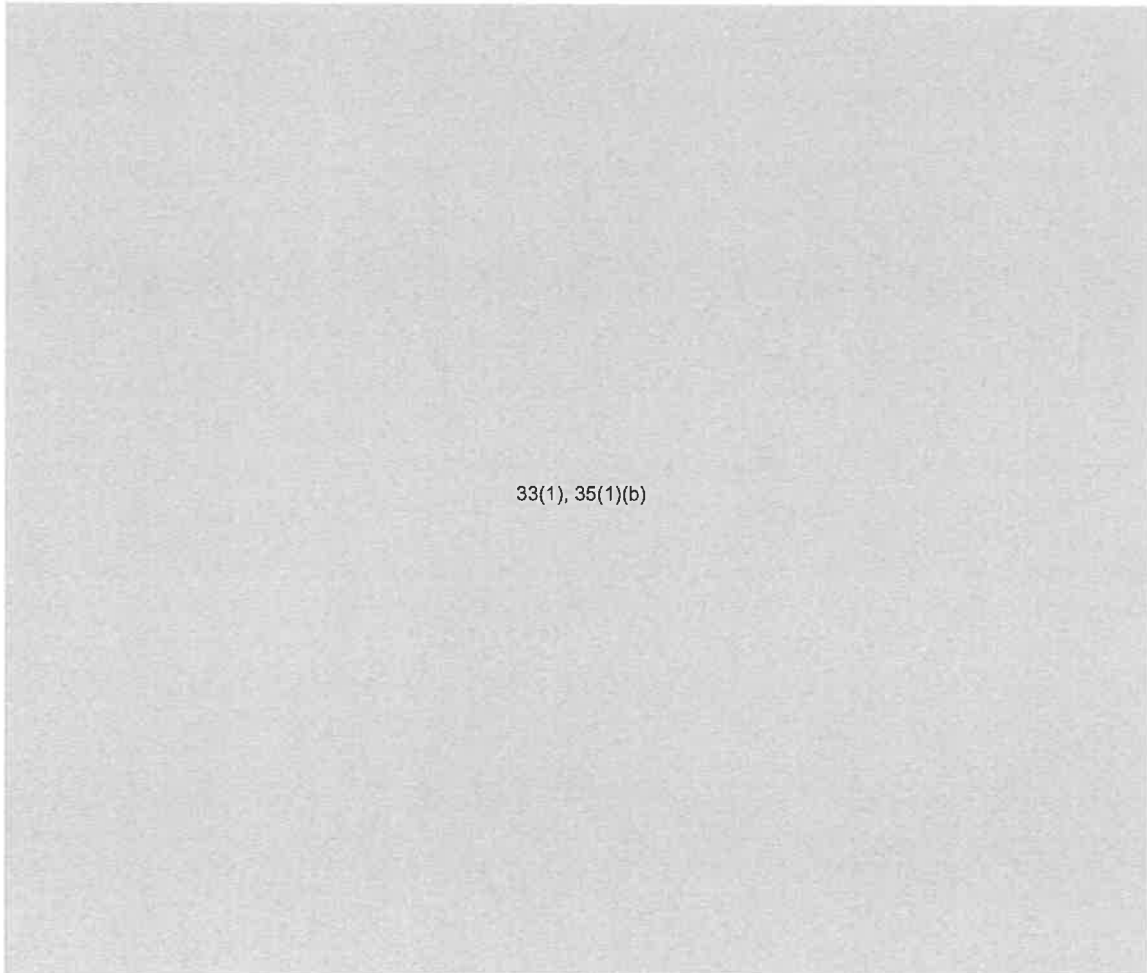
INDEPENDENT REVIEW, FOOTSCRAY PS

61

Vietnamese Community in Australia: Victorian Chapter president Viv Nguyen has written to the school, Footscray MP Katie Hall and education minister James Merlino seeking intervention to ensure the program can run until a review is undertaken.

“It’s always difficult once something stops to be able to restart it,” she said.

Star Weekly sought comment from the school and the office of Mr Merlino.

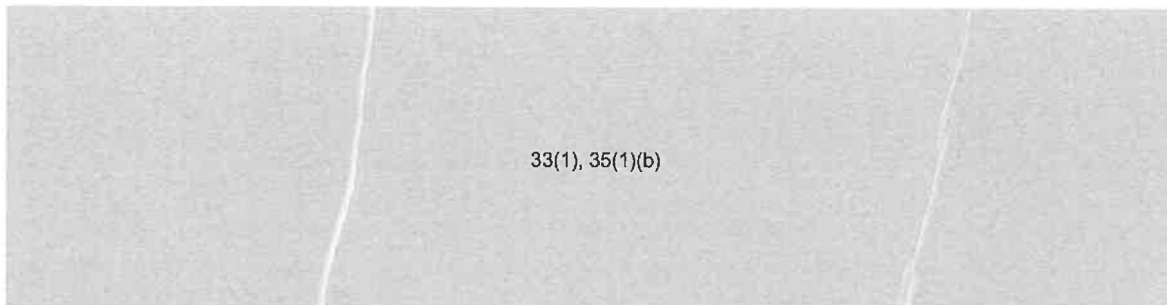


33(1), 35(1)(b)

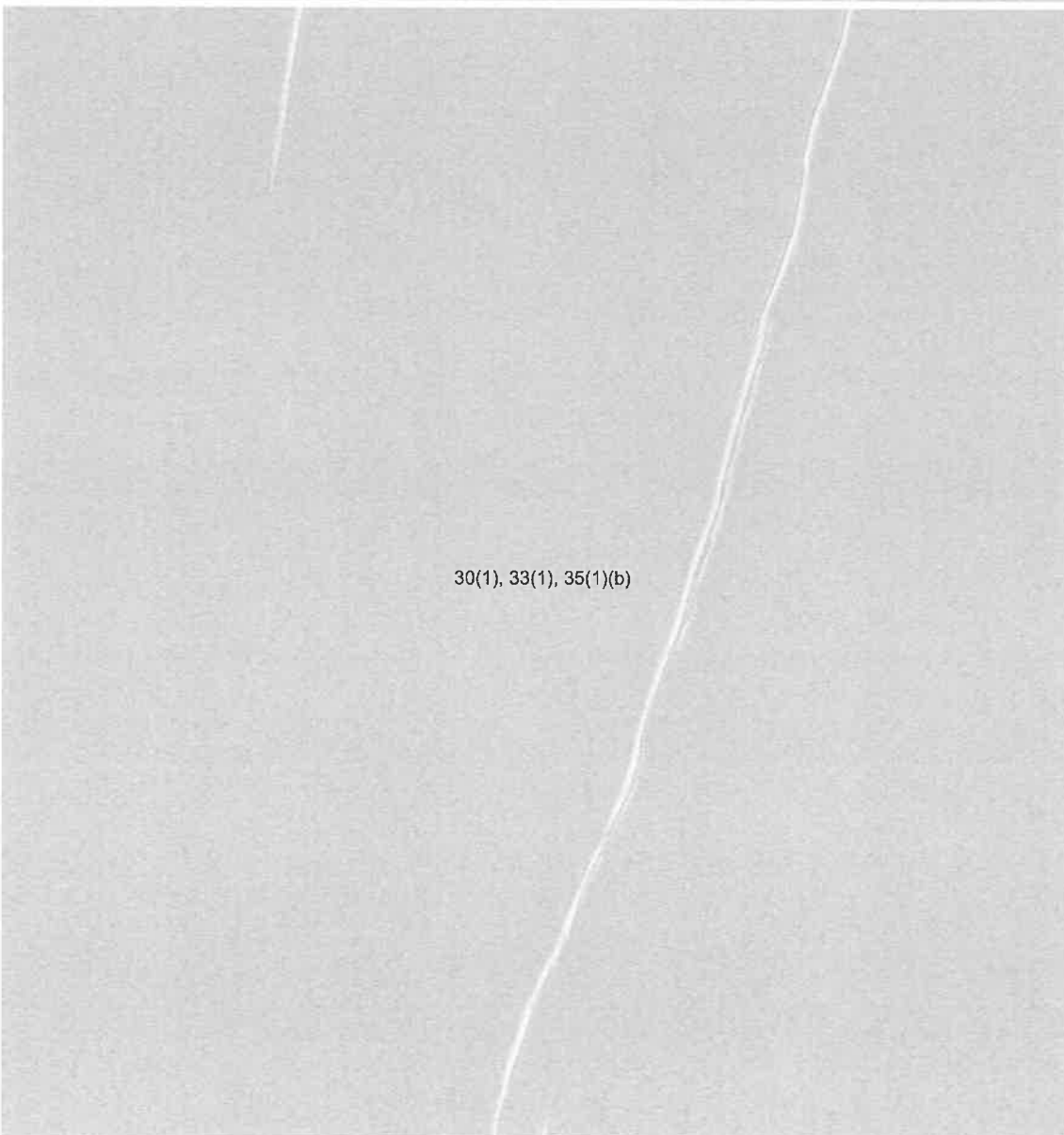
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23 of 25



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30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

Independent Review Report submitted 15/3/2019

30(1), 33(1), 35(1)(b)

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