

2nd October 2020

The Hon. James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place,
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Minister Merlino,

We thank you for your previous communications with parents of Footscray Primary School and taking an interest in this matter. However, we feel there are important issues which remain unresolved. The School Council's decision to end the Vietnamese bilingual program continues to be of great concern for many in the school and broader community. Now several job advertisements for the proposed Italian bilingual program have heightened the urgency.

Most bilingual programs are introduced for their community and cognitive benefits. This was certainly the case 35 years ago with Vietnamese and remains so to this day, a program that is one of a kind in Australia. Even if there were perceptions of recruitment and/or quality concerns with the current Vietnamese offer, we would like to hear and explore them properly and then see them addressed. But this case has not been made nor communicated. Instead, we are left wondering why and how this decision was made, why at this time when Victorian communities are already under so much stress and why our grievances continue to go unaddressed. This causes a significant erosion of trust and confidence in the School leadership for concerned parents and community members.

Vietnamese is a growing language in Victoria, Australia and internationally. Vietnamese is the highest ancestry group in the Victorian State electoral district of Footscray. It is also the fifth most spoken language in Victoria and Australia.

A petition started from within the school parent community in August has gathered over 16,000 signatures, with over 8,000 of them from Victorian residents, including current and past members of the school community.

A large community of fellow Australians who live in a multicultural society identify with and are attached to Vietnam, its history, people and language. This decision to axe the Vietnamese bilingual program represents a loss for the Vietnamese community, the western suburbs of Melbourne, the Footscray Learning Precinct, multiculturalism, Asian literacies, the language community in Melbourne and therefore to us all. However, the biggest loss is suffered by the children of Vietnamese background whose identity, cognitive development, and familial bonds will be weakened. Ultimately their future prospects will be impacted.

We, the undersigned, call on you to put the recruitment on hold until there is due process for our community to find a solution. We look forward to your response and to partnering with you and others who share a commitment to vibrant Vietnamese bilingual education in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Dr Vicki Couzens
Dr Tien Nguyen OAM
Bon Nguyen

Board Member - Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages
Former Federal President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia
President - Vietnamese Community in Australia - Victoria

Phong Nguyen	Chair - Vietnamese Museum Australia
Kim Bui-Quang	Board Member - Vietnamese Museum Australia
Dinh Nguyen	President - Vietnamese Veterans Association of Victoria
Peter Ky Nguyen	President - Footscray Asian Business Association
Robert C Bundle	Indigenous Advisory Group - Footscray Community Arts Centre
Sang Nguyen	Former MP - Melbourne West Legislative Council
Paul Huy Nguyen	President - Vietnamese Community in Australia, NSW
Dr Anh Nguyen	President - Vietnamese Community in Australia, WA
Thuy Quach	President - Vietnamese Teachers Association of Victoria
Faith Thanh Tien Bui	President - Vietnamese Students' Association - Victoria
Can Ngoc Tran	President - Vietnamese Catholics Melbourne
Ryan Johnston	Buxton Contemporary, The University of Melbourne
Dr Van Tran	Linguist, Teacher - Djerriwarrhh Community and Education Services
Dr Anh Nguyen	Associate Research Fellow - Australian Catholic University
Dr Julie Choi	Senior Lecturer (Additional Languages) - Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Dr Tess Do	Lecturer - The University of Melbourne
Dr Chanh Tran	Lecturer - La Trobe University
Margareta Windisch	Yarraville - RMIT lecturer
Lan Anh Hoang	Senior Lecturer - The University of Melbourne
Dr Maree Pardy	Deakin University, Footscray resident
Dr Mary Tomsic	Research Fellow - Australian Catholic University
Dr Lea Campbell	The University of Melbourne, North Fitzroy resident
Dr Jordana Silverstein	Research Officer - La Trobe University
Prof. John Gibbons	Monash University
Dr Tania Canas	cohealth Arts Generator
Dr Liz Murray	University of San Francisco, Former teacher Footscray Primary School
Dr Helen Ngo	Deakin Univeristy
Dr Kate Just	Artist and Academic - The University of Melbourne
Prof. Natalie Tran	Professor of Educational Leadership - California State University, Director - National Resource Center for Asian Languages
Dr Alexandra Kurmann	Head of French and Francophone Studies, Researcher in Vietnamese Diaspora Literature - Macquarie University
Dr Carolyn D'Cruz	Senior Lecturer - La Trobe University
Jess Hardley	Associate Lecturer - Murdoch University
Dr. Markela Panegyres	Theorist and visual artist
Dr Ligia (Licho) López López	Melbourne Graduate School of Education - The Univeristy of Melbourne
Professor Tom G. Griffiths	The University of Newcastle
Ba Phu Ly	Principal - Hong Bang Vietnamese Ethnic School
Son Xuan Nguyen	Principal - Le Van Vietnamese School
Trinh Truong	Vietnamese language teacher
Lê Thị Thu Hằng	Vietnamese language teacher
Tưởng Nguyễn	Primary teacher -Hoppers Crossing
Michael Le	Secondary teacher - Springvale

Quyen Phan	Early Childhood Educator, North Melbourne
Thinh Hoang	Former Footscray Primary School bilingual teacher
Chau Cong	Former Bilingual Coordinator - Footscray Primary School, Teacher - Camberwell Primary School
Ngoc Nguyen	Former Footscray Primary School bilingual teacher
Chau Nguyen	Former VSL Vietnamese teacher
Mai Nguyen	Vietnamese Liaison Officer - Deer Park West Primary School
Huong Nguyen	Secretary - Thien An Vietnamese Ethnic School
Mimmalisa Trifilo	Teacher - Lara Secondary College
Kathy Pham	Classroom Teacher
Quang Thanh Long Tran	Middle School Coordinator, teacher - University High School
Mary Merkenich	LOTE teacher and AEU State Councillor
Emma McNicol	Teacher and Academic, Doctoral Researcher - Balaclava
Cam Hong Thi Khuong	Teacher-Bendigo Kangan Insitute of TAFE
Thuy Quach	Vietnamese teacher
Trisha Wheeler	Classroom Teacher - Footscray
Kevin Long	Educator - Williams Landing
Gemma Cafarella	Former Footscray Primary School student, Lawyer, Footscray resident
Thu Hoang	Former Footscray Primary School student
Tuan Hoang	Former Footscray Primary School Parent
Hung Hoang	Former Footscray Primary School Parent
Tien Nguyen	Former Footscray Primary School Parent
Hoang Tran Nguyen	Footscray Primary - School Council Parent Member
Alison Langley	Footscray Primary School Parent
Anh-Thu Nguyen	Footscray Primary School Parent
Anthony O'Sullivan	Footscray Primary School Parent
Brian Sardeson	Footscray Primary School Parent
Dennis Matotek	Footscray Primary School Parent
Dương Trọng Thủy	Footscray Primary School Parent
Hao Do	Footscray Primary School Parent
Hien Tam Thi Le	Footscray Primary School Parent
Hòa Bùi	Footscray Primary School Parent
Huynh Huu Dinh	Footscray Primary School Parent
Jess McKenzie	Footscray Primary School Parent
Joshua Mullan	Footscray Primary School Parent
Minh Anh Nguyen	Footscray Primary School Parent
Minh Phan	Footscray Primary School Parent
Nam Ho	Footscray Primary School Parent
Ngan Nguyen	Footscray Primary School Parent
Nguyễn Tuấn Việt	Footscray Primary School Parent
Oanh Luc	Footscray Primary School Parent
Paul Beaumont	Footscray Primary School Parent
Quyen Tran	Footscray Primary School Parent
Rachel Pitts	Footscray Primary School Parent
Rebecca Boyce	Footscray Primary School Parent

Tạ Văn Vy	Footscray Primary School Parent
Tam Nguyen	Footscray Primary School Parent
Tony Bui	Footscray Primary School Parent
Trang Nguyễn	Footscray Primary School Parent
Warren Bond	Footscray Primary School Parent
Matthew Holzer & partner	Footscray Primary School Parent
Erin Tsubono	Footscray Primary School Parent
Emma Johansson Taylor	Footscray Primary School Parent
Kim Hutchinson	Footscray Primary School Parent
Paul Davis	Footscray Primary School Parent
Simon Mcsweeney	Footscray Primary School Parent
Heidi Golz	Footscray Primary School Parent
Jacqueline Low	Footscray Primary School Parent
Andy Erskine	Footscray Primary School Parent
Irene Andrianopodos	Footscray Primary School Parent
Michale Leslie	Footscray Primary School Parent
Ben Daniel	Footscray Primary School Parent
Manju Gurung	Footscray Primary School Parent
Anh Tuan Luong	Footscray Primary School Parent
Vũ Kim Phượng	Footscray Primary School Parent
Lê Quang Vinh	Footscray Primary School Parent
Lê Thị Thu Thảo	Footscray Primary School Parent
Mark Ford	Footscray Primary School Parent
Sebastian Bourges	Footscray Primary School Parent
Hong Phan	Footscray Primary School Parent
Bùi Thị Thúy Nhi	Footscray Primary School Parent
Ngân Bảo Đặng	Footscray Primary School Parent
Hà Nguyễn	Footscray Primary School Parent
Thuần Vi	Footscray Primary School Parent
David Chu	Footscray Primary School Parent
Lý Tú Phương	Footscray Primary School Parent
Bùi Thị Mai Hương	Footscray Primary School Parent
Nhu Quỳnh Phạm	Footscray Primary School Parent
Hoàng Tuấn Hải	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Huong Bích Tran	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Thao Thanh Lai	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Quy Xuan Bui	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Ha Do	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Nguyen Hoai Anh	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Thi Thao Linh Phạm	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Vu Van Bien	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Đỗ Phương Anh	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Nghiêm Trang	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Nhu Quỳnh Doan	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
Loc Nguyen	Future Footscray Primary School Parent
André Dao	Future Footscray Primary School Parent

Scilla Taylor	Grandparent at Footscray Primary School
Greta Shannon	Former Footscray Primary School student
Guy Owen	Former Footscray Primary School Parent
Elizabeth Richards	Former Footscray Primary School Parent
Priya Holmes	Former Footscray Primary School Parent
Thi Tran	Translator/Interpreter - Braybrook
Dr Trang Hoang	For Life Medical Centre
Dr Hieu Linh	For Life Medical Centre
Lian Low	Footscray resident
Leanne Petroff	Yarraville
Nick Giannopoulos	Comedian, actor, film director
Nhan Nguyen	Footscray resident
Stacey Kazakis	Brunswick resident
Tara Hoang	Senior Business Analyst, Financial Institutions
Jo Williams	Maidstone
Jorge Andres Jorquera	Victorian Socialists Candidate Maribyrnong Council
Kate Coleman	Greensborough
Jacinta Cashen	Brunswick
Deb Chapman	Brunswick
Thuy Tran	Maribyrnong
May Mauseth	Director - Alviss Consulting
Thai Hoang Phuong Ngo	Co-Director - Hyphenated Projects, Doctoral Researcher
Khanh Do	Bank Manager - NAB
Dzung Nguyen	Social Worker -COHEALTH
Polly Bennett	Footscray resident
Dr Van Davy	Pearl Beach, NSW
Elizabeth Muldoon	West Melbourne
David Linden	Ocean Grove
Irene Fernandez	South Yarra
Toni Bloodworth	Northcote
Claudia Freyer	Fawkner
Hoa Nguyen	Housekeeper - Deer Park
Chung Nguyen	Retired - Braybrook
Carol Nguyen	Research Analyst, Altona North resident
Giselle Au-Nhien Nguyen	Writer, Brunswick East resident
Jinghua Qian	Writer, Footscray resident, Arts Ambassador - Maribyrnong City Council
Jessie Nguyen	Sunshine resident
My Nguyen	Student - Monash University
Emily Pham	Northcote resident
Jennifer Tran	Maidstone resident
Lana Nguyen	Moonee Ponds resident
Hanh Lai	Trader - Ascot Vale
Hong Loan Pham	Bulleen resident
Thanh Nguyen	Lalor resident
Bieu Phan	Housekeeper - Flemington

Thao Nguyen	Housekeeper - Flemington
Hang Nguyen	Self-employed - Flemington
Tu Lai	Housekeeper - Flemington
Thi Nguyen	Housekeeper - Brunswick
Khuong Nguyen	Retired - Flemington
Ngoc Do	Housekeeper - Flemington
Bay Lai	Housekeeper - Flemington
Tuan Tran	Library Officer - Malvern Library
Thi Tran	Self-employed - North Melbourne
Khanh Do	Storeman - Country Road Group
Kien Nguyen	Development Engineer - Clevertronic Pty Ltd
Thao Tran	Housekeeper - North Melbourne
Thuc Tran	Director - Riteware Company
Chau Tran	Retired - Keilor Downs
Viet Tran	Student - The University of Queensland
Anh Nguyen	Retired - Flemington
Anh Tran	Sushi Chef - Sushi Sushi
Kim Do	Developer - Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency
Vy Nguyen	West Footscray resident
Nadia Niaz	Editor - Australian Multilingual Writing Project
Chi Vu	Writer and Doctoral Researcher - Victoria University
Nhan Nguyen	Footscray resident
Rebecca Grimaud	Fitzroy North
Quan Bao	Lalor
Thanh Nguyen	Lalor
Tuan Bao	Bulleen
Gian Phan	Bulleen
Hong Luan Pham	Bulleen
Liz Walsh	Victorian Socialists Candidate Maribyrnong Council - Maidstone
Alison Cooke	Seaford
Brigitte Lambert	Croydon
Ky Dinh Vu	Retired - Chadstone
Sarah Dinh	Customer Service Representative
Natalie Kuo	Mount Waverly
Alex Elliott	Class Instructor
Andrew Ng	Dentist - St Albans
Jacinta Schreuder	Melbourne
Lin Cheng	Melbourne
Peter Ngo	Keysborough
Cath Edwards	Social Worker
Lisa Nguyen	Radiographer - Balaclava
Paula Joyce	Youth Counsellor - Footscray
Matt Tambellini	Graphic Designer - Footscray
Ai Nguyen	Reservoir
Rachel Walker	Disability Supervisor - Footscray
Olivia Tian Chai Koh	Melbourne

Elly Louchart	Clifton Hill
Muhammad Shahid Imran	Glen Iris
Oanh Tran	Beauty Therapy - Lalor
Veronica Witteveen	Braybrook
Văn Vũ Nguyễn	Richmond
Xuân Toàn Nguyễn	Richmond
Kim Lâu Nguyễn	Richmond
John Nguyễn	Richmond
Thi Thanh Hương Nguyễn	Richmond
Prue Delalande	Senior Youth Worker, Dandenong
Patrick Donelan	Northcote
Stephen Robert Irving	Yarraville
Alexandra Roper	Coburgh North
Catriona Vi Nguyen-Robertson	The University of Melbourne, West Footscray
Bryden Williams	Footscray
Dominic Hong Duc Golding	Vietnamese Adoptee and Community Advocate
Van T Rudd	Visual Artist - Sunshine
Angelina Russell	Social worker - Geelong
Tina Tran	Footscray
Rachel Sztanski	Footscray
David Jones	Yarraville
Sarah Brasier	Artist - Preston