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## Early concern about Steiner method

Milanda Rout | July 28, 2007

**SERIOUS concerns about Steiner education were raised in a government report seven years before a policy change by the Bracks administration cleared the way for its use in Victorian state schools.**

The report, completed by the Victorian Department of Education, says Steiner's approach -- in which children learn to read and write after their adult teeth come through at age seven -- was the "antithesis" of the Government's program.

The report was completed by two curriculum officers in 2000 for then acting regional director Greg Gibbs after Footscray City Primary School indicated it wanted a Steiner stream.

Mr Gibbs told the school he was unable to "support such a proposal" but the principal introduced Steiner in 2001.

The program has caused deep division among parents, and the state Government has been forced to intervene, dissolving the school council last year and establishing an inquiry.

Despite this, the state Government last year changed departmental policy, allowing programs such as Steiner and Montessori to be run in state schools.

The report examined Steiner curriculum proposals provided by Footscray City Primary School and information available online about Steiner education.

Authors Pat Hincks and Janette Cook say Steiner's ban on computers and multimedia in primary school is in "direct contradiction" to department policies.

"Steiner education is based on a philosophy of cocooning children from the world to develop their imagination," the report says.

"This is in direct contrast to, for example, the studies of society and environment ... where the emphasis is on study of family as a 'starting point to help them understand the world in which they live'."

A Victorian Department of Education spokeswoman said specialised curriculums had rigorous guidelines.

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