



blindness and low vision services

Sale of the Burwood Property (Victoria) Definitive Statement

04 September 2007

It is understood, Vision Australia's recent announcement regarding the sale of the Burwood property in Victoria, which houses a number of services including Vision Australia's school, has caused some confusion and concern.

Vision Australia wishes to confirm it's commitment to the on-going provision of education services for children who are blind or have low vision. The decision to sell the Burwood site simply means we must now move quickly, as planned, to determine how and where best to continue to deliver these vital services. Any re-location of service provision will be managed so as to ensure a seamless transition.

The final Education Services review is due in September. Following this, a working party will be formed to implement the recommendations and Vision Australia remains committed to working with parents and staff during the transition period through regular consultation.

Vision Australia looks forward to working with all parties in developing and implementing renewed education and schools programs.

Questions and Answers

• Will Vision Australia have a school and where will it be?

The decision to sell Burwood (Victoria) is a decision about the site. It is not a decision about education services or the role of a school as part of the delivery of education services for children who are blind or have severe low vision.

Once the sale of the property at Burwood is complete, the school will continue to operate at Burwood at least throughout the 2009 school year.

Vision Australia's expects current and new students who are best served by a specialist school will continue to be supported by Vision Australia school programs. A new school site needs to be in the most central location possible and education services need to be accessible for all students and families across Melbourne and country Victoria.

The Children's Services review includes identifying what a school needs to be and how it meets the needs of students and families. The review will be completed in September and outcomes published in October. The review will clarify the school programs, facilities and location we need to provide.

• How will Vision Australia support students with additional disabilities?

Vision Australia's services continually evolve to ensure people who are blind or have low vision can fully participate in the activities of life they choose. We are aware of the needs of children with additional disabilities and are committed to continuing to meet the needs of all our students.

Vision Australia understands these needs cannot always be met by the services we currently offer, therefore one of the goals of the Children's Services Review is to determine how can we best meet as many needs as possible with the public and private funding available to us. Vision Australia will continue to lobby government and advocate for the services needed to ensure children with additional disabilities necessary services.

• Why sell the property before Children Services/Education Review is completed?

The decision to sell Burwood is a decision about the property not the school. The location of the school and the size, age, facilities and condition of the buildings are the reasons for the sale. The sale will help fund new purpose built facilities, new programs and expanded services.

Vision Australia is working with the Victorian Dept Education & Training who is also undertaking a review of education systems, services and funding. Other partners such as St Scholastica's, the Office of Catholic Education and St Andrews are also planning for next year and beyond. We wanted to ensure the decision about the property sale was made public as soon as possible so everyone has the same clear knowledge about Vision Australia's intentions and aspirations.

• What are the impacts and options for staff?

Vision Australia wants to retain our valued Burwood site staff. The knowledge and experience of the school staff will be a significant contribution to the new services developed from the Children Services Review.


Burwood staff will have opportunities to move to roles in school programs, visiting teacher services and new programs developed from the learning gained through the review and or other Vision Australia services.

• **What is the government's response to the sale of the property?**

In determining to sell the property at Burwood, Vision Australia has not decided to close the school. Vision Australia is continuing to work with state government and other service partners in providing education services and each year we secure funding to continue the provision of these services.

We are currently sharing our strategic planning with DET as we are both are reviewing education services. Vision Australia has already and will continue to strongly advocate for adequate funding and access to services to enable children who are blind or have low vision to 'fully participate in all the activities of life they choose'

• **Who can we talk to, how can we have a say?**

1. Parents and staff are invited to ring Ian Moore (Acting) Manager Burwood Education Centre ( 0417 386 395) to talk or to arrange to meet.
2. A written viewpoint or submission can be sent to Ian or Brandon Ah Tong-Pereira - Secretariat Support Officer, Policy and Advocacy, Vision Australia 454 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong, 3144. These submissions will be forwarded on to the CEO, and the Review Project Manager to help inform the Vision Australia's consultation and decision making.
3. Parents are invited to attend the next Parent Committee meeting at the school on Sept 3.

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