

# SEEDS

## SPECIALIST EDUCATION AND EVOLVING DISABILITY SERVICES

ISSUE **07**

An exciting move

What does inclusion look like?

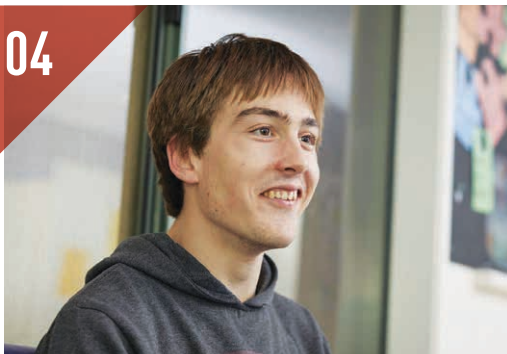
VMCH creates OASIS

News from around VMCH



**KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER**

04



VMCH's short-term accommodation services for children and adults with a disability are helping keep families together. Dean (pictured) attends one of VMCH's services in Lilydale.

06



Kids give Oasis, in Ivanhoe, the thumbs up. VMCH's newest service for children with disability is finished and ready for its first visitors.

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## SEEDS

We welcome your feedback and  
contributions to SEEDS.

### Contact:

Editor: Mariza O'Keefe on 0405 054 177  
[Mariza.okeefe@vmch.com.au](mailto:Mariza.okeefe@vmch.com.au)

or

Susan Smith  
[Susan.Smith@vmch.com.au](mailto:Susan.Smith@vmch.com.au)

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## A WORD FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

**Almost one in five people have a disability. Therefore, this community makes up the largest minority in Australia and yet so many still fight so hard to be seen and included.**

Around 45 per cent of people with a disability in Australia are living in or near poverty. Only 31 per cent are in the workforce, compared to 83 per cent of people without a disability- these statistics are confronting.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is an important step in the right direction in addressing such inequality. Another important step is education about the importance of inclusion and the true beauty of diversity.

That's why each year International Day of People with Disability, on December 3, is an important opportunity to raise awareness. Empowering people with disability and ensuring inclusiveness and equality is this years' theme.

I'm proud to say that VMCH's disability support staff strive every day to do just that and SEEDS magazine shares some of those stories.

The December edition of SEEDS magazine also features the latest news about our specialist school, St Paul's Colleges' move to Balwyn. It is a busy and exciting time for staff and its 60 students.

A special thank you to all the people who supported the recent Community Art and Craft Exhibition that raised money for the new school's Discovery Centre of Imagination. The exhibition contributed to the appeal which has raised over \$45,000 thus far.

This is our last SEEDS magazine for the year and the festive season is fast approaching. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. We look forward to another great year in 2019.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Williamson'.

**David Williamson**  
**General Manager**  
**Community and Disability Services.**



Dean and his mum Louise.

## KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

**Louise Anderson's son, Dean, has severe autism, an intellectual disability and epilepsy. She is brutally honest about what life would be like for her family without the regular overnight breaks they receive from caring for Dean.**

"I wouldn't be married. We'd be divorced. We simply wouldn't be a family unit. Dean would be over to the system. I hate to say that and I don't want to say that. But that's the truth. It's where we'd be." Louise describes her teenage son's daily care needs as complex and relentless, and says short-term accommodation was the answer to their prayers.

"It's essential, it's important. It is a lifeline to our family. It really is."

At least 50 families relinquish their child with a disability each year in Victoria. Could the creation of more short-term disability accommodation options help some of these desperate families?

Dean attends a short-term accommodation home in Lilydale for children with disability run by Villa Maria Catholic Homes.

VMCH Accommodation Services Senior Manager, Kristy Simmonds, says while there is a move towards providing people with a disability support in their homes, short-term accommodation still plays an important role for many families.

"Families need to have the choice about the type of short-term accommodation that is right for their child and family. Overnight support in the

home is not the right option for all families.”

Louise says Dean’s time at Lilydale is a lot more than just a break for mum and dad. Louise jokes that Dean also gets a break from his “nagging parents”.

It’s even more than that. The family works closely with the team at Lilydale to help Dean develop skills that help him become independent as possible.

“It really is a warm, safe, caring environment where he can generalise those skills that we are working on at home as well,” Louise says.

“Our aim for him is to be as happy and independent as he possibly can be and this house provides the interim step.”

Children develop and learn so much when they are in a safe and fun environment away from home and their family – whether it is at camps or sleepovers. Children with complex disabilities are no different except they are included in these activities a lot less frequently. Without short-term disability accommodation, many would miss these chances to socialise, play with other children and learn new skills. On the day Louise drops Dean off at Lilydale short-term accommodation, they both look comfortable and relaxed as they say goodbye to each other. Dean gives mum a peck on the cheek before she leaves.

Over the next three days, Louise plans to recharge and re-acquaint herself with her husband. Tonight is a pyjama night with a glass of red wine.

Meanwhile, Dean will be given the chance to enjoy different activities. Disability support staff will also work with him on goals determined by his parents. He will be expected to do many things independently or with a bit of support.

It has taken a long time to get to this place, Louise admits.

The Andersons live in an area with few short-term accommodation facilities available. They chose VMCH because it had an outdoor area that included a playground and trampoline. She says the family stay because of the staff.

“They grasp very early on that this is an opportunity to teach children independence. They don’t just come here and get away with no boundaries, no rules. Anything that I have asked them to work with Dean on – like his toileting ... his rewards program. They have just carried on

seamlessly here. It’s great.”

July marked the fifth anniversary since the NDIS started at four trial sites in Australia. The \$22 billion scheme aims to give people with a disability choice and control in every aspect of their life and one area in need of attention is housing.

About 28,000 Australians with disability are expected to be supported by NDIS funding for Specialist Disability Accommodation once the scheme is fully rolled out. It is still unclear what impact the NDIS will have on short-term disability accommodation.

Kristy hopes to see more short-term accommodation options for families in Victoria. She says VMCH would like to increase its own stock of short-term accommodation houses. Currently it runs five for children and one for adults.

“VMCH sees these services as a lifeline to many families,” she said.

“Demand for short-term accommodation is increasing for families juggling a child with a disability, other children and their work commitments.”



**Learn more about our disability accommodation services on 1800 798 921.**

## VMCH CREATES AN OASIS FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

**With its indoor climbing wall, a fish tank that takes up a large part of another wall, a backyard featuring specially designed outdoor play equipment, landscaped garden and a cubby house – VMCH’s newest short-term accommodation for children with disability is sure to be a kid’s oasis, just as its name suggests.**

The five-bedroom house has been designed to support children with sensory processing support needs and children on the autism spectrum.

VMCH already runs short-term accommodation services in Melbourne for children at four houses and adults in one house. The new and specially designed house can accommodate five children at any one time between 10 to 15 years. VMCH will manage the house and disability support workers will provide support to the children 24-hours-a-day and seven-days-a-week.

Chairman of VMCH’s Board, Bill Scales described Oasis as a beautiful, safe and modern ‘home-away-from-home’ for children to enjoy.

“When children are away from family, it is important they are in a safe and nurturing environment,” Mr Scales said.

“Children who attend our short-term accommodation services learn how to be more independent, to gain new skills, to make friends and enjoy themselves when away from their families and carers.”

VMCH General Manager of Community and Disability Services, David Williamson, said this was an exciting addition VMCH’s short-term accommodation services.

“VMCH is passionate about providing support in a safe, fun and enjoyable environment for children and meeting the needs of families and carers,” he said.

“Oasis is specially designed for children with disability, especially sensory processing support needs, and we’re so excited to be able to offer this to the families we support in the Ivanhoe area.”

**If you would like more information about Oasis call our Disability Support team on 1800 798 921.**

Oasis, in Ivanhoe, has been designed to be a fun and comfortable home-away-from-home for children with a disability.





Take a look inside VMCH's Oasis.

## VMCH CREATING ACCESSIBLE SMART HOUSE FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITY

VMCHs' board and executive recently visited our organisation's exciting new project – a fully accessible smart house for adults who have high physical support needs.

The five-bedroom home, in Glen Waverley, will include fully automatic opening doors, spacious shared spaces and an accessible backyard.

The five adults who will eventually call it home will enjoy more independence and comfort thanks to assistive technology features being included in the design of the home.

The home is expected to be finished by December 2018 and welcome its new residents in early 2019.

**If you would like to learn more call us on 1800 798 921.**

VMCH board and executive visit fully accessible smart house for adults with high physical support needs.





St Paul's College Principal Tim Hemphill catching up with some prep students.

## EXCITEMENT BUILDS AS SCHOOL MOVE DRAWS NEAR

**Preparing for the end of a school year, building a new school and packing up an old one – you could say VMCH's specialist school St Paul's College principal, Tim Hemphill, and his team are busy!**

He wouldn't disagree, but they are loving it.

The school's 60 students, 30 teachers, allied health professionals and support staff, thousands of boxes of books, toys, equipment, educational resources will all be on the move from Kew to its new school at 3 Brenbeal Street, Balwyn, for the beginning of a new school year in February 2019.

The new Balwyn site was used as the year nine campus for Genazzano Convent. It will become a more modern and accessible school for St Paul's College, a school that has supported students with a wide range of intellectual, physical, and sensory disabilities for more than 60 years.

St Paul's College has supported thousands of children with a wide range of support needs. This new school will ensure that the school has an exciting new future.

It's a mammoth task and very exciting.

Building a new school that is purpose-built to support students of all abilities ensures the design

caters for things like accessible classrooms, inclusive playgrounds and accessible transport.

The playground designer is creating spaces that will be inclusive and welcoming of all children. There will be play spaces for junior, middle school and senior students. Interesting sensory spaces are being created inside and outside. The school will be colourful, fun and inviting.

"It shouldn't be underestimated the impact this will have in terms of the students and the perception they have of themselves – that they deserve these great resources and that they can do anything that they want to do. I think that's really significant," Tim said.

Tim excitedly described a six-seat carousel swing that accommodates two spaces for wheelchairs that are facing each-other. This allows all students to enjoy a ride on a carousel together.

Technology will be an important feature of the new school. Students will have access to the greatest and latest technology and equipment to help them learn in a fun and interesting environment.

Tim said students, parents and teachers were super excited about the move. Senior students have visited the site as part of the transition and loved what they saw.



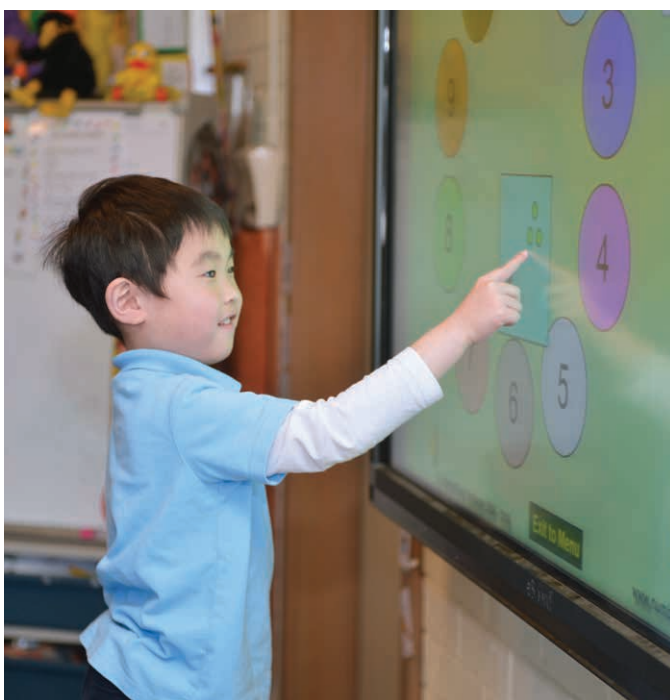
The new school will include:

- Assistive Technology Centre
- Technology Pods
- Sensory Room
- STEAM room (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics)
- Black Cat Café and Kitchen Garden for senior students to develop essential life skills to pave the way for their future employment and independence
- Outdoor Discovery Play Spaces.

The proud history of St Paul's College will not be forgotten. The school was founded by Brother Patrick O'Neill on February 12, 1957. It emerged as a highly regarded school for vision impaired children. With Brother O'Neill at the helm, the school helped students strive to achieve great success in their lives and continued to thrive with no government funding for many years.

Without grants and funding available at the time, Brother O'Neill was able to establish the school by rallying community support to open the St Paul's School for the Blind, at its current site, Fernhurst Grove, Kew.

"We're not leaving behind the spirit of Brother O'Neill and everything that St Paul's Kew stands for. If anything, that is why we're moving: to ensure we can continue to provide opportunities for our students and to do all that we need to improve the school environment," Tim said.



## HELP US BUILD OUR DISCOVERY CENTRE OF IMAGINATION

Building independence, nurturing talents and encouraging creativity are pivotal to helping children of all abilities reach their full potential.

These will be the hallmarks of a remarkable new school environment tipped to change the lives of students for generations to come at VMCH's specialist school, St Paul's College.

The school's Discovery Centre of Imagination will be an integrated learning environment where each child is given the best possible springboard from which to learn to live as independently as possible.

VMCH's latest fundraising appeal, Donate to Create, aims to raise money for the Discovery Centre of Imagination. We are hoping that the generous community that has supported this school for more than 60 years will once again help us achieve this exciting and ambitious project.

"The Centre will support real-life scenarios and give life-affirming skills in a safe and sensory-specific learning environment," St Paul's Principal Tim Hemphill said.

"The ultimate aim is to help our students prepare for independent living through supportive relationships which foster individual academic and personal development."

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION TO THIS LIFE-CHANGING APPEAL, CALL VMCH ON 1800 036 377 OR VISIT [WWW.VMCH.COM.AU/DONATETOCREATE](http://WWW.VMCH.COM.AU/DONATETOCREATE)**

## NEWS FROM AROUND VMCH

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY, DECEMBER 3

What does inclusion look like?

This was a question put to people in the VMCH community to mark International Day of People with Disability, on December 3.

Inclusion is a principle that people with disability and their loved ones fight for every day. Whether it is in big or small ways – striving for a community where everyone is included makes a difference; and brings us closer to a community that values diversity and welcomes all.



Glassshaus Nursery owner Paul Hyland and Nathan Hoare share a passion for horticulture and the Sydney Swans.



Disability support worker Caroline and Lara at trampoline centre, Jumpdeck, in Knoxfield. Lara enjoys getting out of her wheelchair to enjoy a bit of a bounce each week.

At VMCH, inclusion looks a bit like this:

- Our weekly sailing program in Albert Park Lake where people who love sailing share that passion with children of all abilities
- Adults with disabilities who visit a trampoline venue and escape the limitations of their wheelchairs to enjoy the sensation of bouncing
- Visitors to our adult's day program enjoying live music at a local hotel.

Then there is Nathan who recently started working a few hours a week at North Melbourne plant nursery, Glassshaus Nursery. Nathan lives at VMCH's Austin Street, a home for people with an acquired brain injury who might otherwise be living in aged care. His boss, Paul Hyland, told VMCH that he knew Nathan would be a good employee when he heard that he barracks for the Sydney Swans.

"It helps that he's got an infectious personality and he happens to barrack for the same footy team as I do, so it all works out well. He comes in pots plants and we have a bit of a joke about the footy."

The VMCH team hope you enjoy these photos of the people we support enjoying life in the community and Happy International Day of People with Disability to the people we support.



Visitors to VMCH's adult day program in Wantirna and Mount Waverley visit a local hotel to enjoy some live music.



VMCH's specialist school, St Paul's College, senior students visit Albert Park Lake each week and take part in a program that makes sailing accessible to all. Students Lily (first image) and Bridget (second image) are pictured





**YOU COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF OTHERS BY SUPPORTING VILLA MARIA CATHOLIC HOMES.**

**I PLEDGE TO DONATE \$ .....**

Thank you for contributing to our Donate to Create appeal, supporting our specialist school St Paul's College.

Full Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: ..... Phone: .....

Email: .....

**DONATIONS OF \$2 AND OVER ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.**

Cash  Cheque (made payable to Villa Maria Catholic Homes)

Please debit my (tick one)  Visa  Mastercard

Cardholder's Full Name: .....

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's Signature: .....

Yes, I would like to receive more information about the VMCH and the people it supports.

**VMCH BANKING DETAILS**  
**ACCOUNT NAME: VMCH OPERATING ACCOUNT**  
**BANK: NAB**  
**BSB: 083-125**  
**ACCOUNT NO: 515 620 356**

[vmch.com.au](http://vmch.com.au)



**GENERATIONS OF CARE**



**VMCH supports people with a disability, their families, and carers through every stage of their life.**

**NDIS AND SPECIALTY SERVICES**

- NDIS support coordination
- Allied health services, speech & occupational therapy, physiotherapy
- Support in the home and community

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

- Early Childhood Intervention Services, music & play therapy
- Supported inclusion into mainstream schools
- Specialist education school, ages 5-18
- After-hours school care, school holiday programs & short weekends
- Short-term accommodation (respite)

**ADULT**

- Group-based activities
- Day activity programs to develop social and life skills
- Holiday and camping weekends
- Short-term accommodation (respite)

**CALL US**

We can help you make the most of your NDIS plan.

**T: 1800 798 921**

**E: [seeds.response@vmch.com.au](mailto:seeds.response@vmch.com.au)**