# Overview of SPEVI actions and activities in response to the Proposed changes to the workforce and roles of Visiting Teachers in Victoria by the Victorian Government of Education

August 2023

While acknowledging this campaign was very much a joint effort by many driven individuals and organisations, we have listed some of SPEVI’s activities in response to the Change Proposal of the Victorian Department of Education (date), proposing staff cuts to Visting Teachers (Vision Impairment). Our campaign to stop this proposal from going ahead was successful, with it being announced by the VIC government on 22 August that the department will not be proceeding with the original proposal. All current Visiting Teachers and their managers will continue to be employed and no students who currently receive specialist support from the Visiting Teacher Service will lose that support.

* On 2nd August SPEVI, members of the SPEVI COM had a meeting to discuss actions in response to the announced changes with key stakeholders and representatives from organisations such as the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment, Blind Citizens Australia, the National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf, Usher Kids, Vision Australia, NextSense, Parents of Deaf Children, Deakon University, and the University of Melbourne.
* On 7 August, SPEVI’s Committee of Management released a Position Statement on spevi.net. Blind Citizens Australia readily supported this Statement.
* Next, SPEVI put out a joint statement with the National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf (NAATD), signed by the three presidents. SPEVI then shared this ‘Joint Position Statement in response to the Department of Education (Victoria) proposed staff reductions to Visiting Teachers for deaf and hard of hearing students and students who are blind, have low vision, or are deafblind’ widely, including directly with the Victorian Minister of Education and relevant Members of Parliament, as well as on the SPEVI website, News List and social media.
* SPEVI created a document with information for parents to support their advocacy for Victorian Visiting Teachers Hearing and Vision Teachers. The document included contact emails and sample questions. This was made available on spevi.net.
* On behalf of SPEVI, Melissa Fanshawe consulted and communicated with parents in the Low Vision/Blind Parent Group Australia - For parents of Low Vision Children. Parents have been a strong voice all along this process, rallying for their children’s rights to inclusive education, and meeting with the Shadow Education Minister and Shadow Disability Minister at Parliament House. Local and regional newspapers published articles in support of their efforts.
* SPEVI was involved in an interview with the program Conversation Hour on ABC radio, Emily White representing SPEVI and giving her perspective as an academic. Other stakeholders gave strong interviews too. You can listen at <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/theconversationhour/the-conversation-hour/102714214>
* Members of the SPEVI COM reached out to journalists and media contacts, including ABC’s Nas Campanella who did a report on the developments. Several newspapers published articles in response, as well as Sky News.
* On 22nd August SPEVI arranged a meeting with the Victorian Ministry of Education. Dr Frances Gentle represented SPEVI (as well as ICEVI International). The meeting was attended by Sally Karandrews (CEO of Blind Citizens Australia), Hon Natalie Hutchins, Minister for Education and Minister for Women, Dr David Howes, Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services, and Stephen Fraser, Deputy Secretary, School Education Programs and Support.

Melissa Fanshawe and Phia Damsma

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