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This report is the second phase of a research project investigating the future workplace environment of Vision Australia, the peak body for the support and advocacy for the vision impaired in the Australia. The study has been developed in partnership between the RMIT University Design Research Labs and Vision Australia, with support from Antarctica Office Architects and Index Architecture.

The first phase of the study reviewed the network of facilities throughout Australia, and built on previous studies of contemporary workplaces in Victoria, and of the particular needs of primary care clinics in Australia. Through an examination of contemporary design practice in workplace and low vision accessible design, and a review of the conditions and work practices at Vision Australia's current sites, a series of preliminary guidelines and recommendations for a design approach to Vision facilities.

This second phase takes the Kooyong headquarters of Vision Australia as a case study for the modelling and testing of the design principles, and treats the Kooyong facilities as a prototype workspace and model for other facilities in the network.

The process of design makes it possible to test and visualise various approaches that have been developed, and speculate on other possibilities that might not have otherwise been considered. This is our primary medium for research; a form of spatial modelling to discover new configurations. The general context for this work is the contemporary move towards workplaces which are more open and flexible, offer more variety in the settings for work, and connect more closely with public and shared places like libraries, cafes and schools.

The design for the two floors of the building evidenced great potential to transform the organisation and its spaces, and in particular open it up to greater interaction with public and community uses. There is great potential to capitalise on the location, size and diversity of the facilities at Kooyong; and a number of alternate options are posed as viable. The approaches taken to this design are able to be taken as a model applicable is a wide range of locations and scales across the network of facilities, and in other organisations. The simple design devices proposed which respond to low vision design principles, are equally applicable as good design in open and activity based workplaces.

The design work of this phase is intended as a broad concept design which would not only guide design approaches elsewhere, but would trigger more detailed development of the various components of the Kooyong facilities, either in discrete stages or as a larger redevelopment project.
WHAT IS A DESIGN PROTOTYPE?

A prototype is a first or a preliminary model from which future versions are developed. The prototype also serves to illustrate the typical principles or qualities of a model.

Within architecture this idea differs slightly as by necessity almost all designs are specific to a location, and have unique characteristics and qualities. Moreover it is impossible to truly understand the potentials and limitations of a set of design approaches without fully engaging in the specific conditions that define the architectural ‘problem.’

An architectural prototype is a piece of design work that engages with the specific problems of a site and a brief, but does so in such a way as to provide a broad set of conclusions to be drawn about the work. By adopting a heavily conceptual, or even radical approach, it is possible test the limits of a set of ideas. It is in the doing of the design that the clearest insights about a particular problem emerge. While the design itself might be specific to the site, the analysis of the design and the lessons learned from doing it provide insights that can be applied to future projects.

The second phase of this research study draws on the specific example of Vision Australia’s Kooyong Headquarters as a testing ground for speculation on what the future of Vision Australia’s workplace might look and how it might function. While the design outcomes of this project will take the form of an architectural design specific to this site, it is expected that the lessons learned from undertaking this project will be applicable to most, if not all, Vision Australia sites and, more broadly to the field of workplace design in general.
3 KOOYONG SITE CONDITIONS

Despite being well located within its host city, close to public transport and easily accessible for low vision clients and staff accessing the site, Vision Australia’s Kooyong Headquarters is one of the more challenging buildings in the organisation’s property portfolio.

The building is a composite of a number of earlier structures that have been renovated and connected through a more recent addition. The later design includes a prominent drop-off and turn circle, which is helpful in terms of providing vehicle access close to the key access points of the complex, however has resulted in an irregular organisation system for the building, with the primary circulation for the complex following a radial pathway that feeds off into various different wings and annexes that are currently given over to specific departments and functional clusters. This has the effect of making the building extremely difficult to navigate for those unfamiliar with the plan, a situation which is exacerbated by compromised vision.
Despite being occupied as a single building the complex retains a large amount of internal subdivision. The space has been divided into a fine grain of small offices, and various different types of workspaces. This is in part due to the requirements of structure and the non-standard form of the architecture, however the majority of the partitions are non-structural, and either remained from or added to the original structure for reasons pertaining to the ‘culture’ of the occupying organisation. A large amount internal division makes it challenging to organise an office around lines of site, or clear directional pathways. Moreover, even in an activity based work place it tends to prohibit casual or informal interaction between workers and visitors in different areas of the building, as occupants tend to be ‘silied’ in different partitions of the building. The current internal configuration makes any future adaptation an expensive and time consuming proposition. While there would be considerable financial and logistical challenges associated with doing so, the refurbishment of the space to provide for an open flexible use space would have the advantage of effectively future proofing the complex in the event of future change.

The urban interface and approach to the building is a great strength or opportunity that is currently being underutilised. With the direct pathway to the train station arriving in the centre of the complex, and directly opposite the main drop off there is an opportunity to create a centralised first point of contact at the confluence of these entrances. This would considerably simplify what is otherwise a confusing sequence of arrival.
The client service delivery area and surrounds is one of the major strengths of the Kooyong complex. By placing the patient consulting rooms deep within the plan and adjacent to the office workspace for the client service part of the organisation, clients visiting the site are exposed to ‘back of house’ components of the organisation. This works to ‘deinstitutionalise’ the space and break down the separation between the client and the service provider, placing all occupants of the building in an equal setting. This is somewhat undermined by the convoluted access to route to the space which is indirect and disorienting.

There is a large number of public functions and semi-public spaces that are core components of the facilities at Kooyong, which are presently underutilised and/or inaccessible to the public. In most cases it is not imperative that these spaces be made public, however for an organisation that is seeking to present a more open and person centred the provision of a more porous public interface could be a means to achieve this within the architectural language of the organisation’s property network.
As a state funded facility the library is required to be accessible to the public. Although it is available, access is extremely limited and difficult to navigate. By closing the space of with a partition wall and doors, it is unclear that the library is a publicly available space. Even for those who purposely seek the space out, it is difficult to identify the library within the overall building complex. As with many of the spaces in the complex, the library is heavily partitioned. More broadly, the move from physical media to digital media has resulted in changes to the spatial requirements of libraries – moving from an archive to a social/civic space, as well as a place to engage with digital media. There is an opportunity to re-purpose the Felix library as a public space that provides a flexible space to engage with various media that specifically address the requirements of low vision users.

The Vision Australia Radio Facilities at Kooyong could potentially be provided a more public interface. The radio facilities at other sites, including Warrnambool and Geelong, are orientated directly onto the main entries of their facility, and in the case of Warrnambool, facing onto the street. While there are problems to do with noise infiltration in public settings, these can be mitigated through technical design solutions, and public broadcasting is not an uncommon concept. The majority of VAR’s staff and broadcasters are volunteers, so the current location on second floor provides a convoluted sequence of arrival for volunteers accessing the station.
The community centre is currently underutilised, and could potentially be re-organised to provide for a broader range of uses. While there is a door offering a direct point of access, this is permanently locked and not used as an access point. The primary access is from the central spine, which limits after hours use of the space. By opening up a direct access point to the outside, this wing of the building can be thought of as a stand-alone section that can be closed off from the main body of the complex and used for events and functions without interfering with the operation of the building or compromising security. At present there a large percentage of the space is given over to classroom workshop type spaces and storage. While storage is a vital component of the complex, the space it is occupying presently is a prime part of the Kooyong complex. By relocating storage to another part of the building it could be possible to reorganise and re-purpose this wing to accommodate broad range of different activities, making it potentially attractive as a venue – both for internal and external events.

The café is a major strength of the facility. It a large organisation made up of a casualised and volunteer workforce, it provides an informal meeting point for staff and clients. Although the space is a leased tenancy it could be made more accessible and open to both the internal environment of the building complex, as well as more publicly accessible. In particular café spaces within activity based work places provide a causal working space that staff can utilise both as meeting spaces, but also a pleasant setting to continue working on a laptop or tablet.
The retail space at Kooyong is similar to many of the retail spaces that commonly are located at Vision Australia sites. The space is often a by-product space adjacent to the reception, or waiting areas and is a mixture of countertop and under bench storage. The arrangement does not display items in a coherent fashion, is difficult to identify as being commercial space, and a challenge navigate in terms of the zoning and set-out of the products. A purpose designed retail space that is orientated properly onto the main concourse of the building would provide for a far more coherent retail strategy. There is potential to produce a standardised system that could be applied across different sites.

Both the design and the location of the building are strong in terms of its aspect and relationship to the environment, and its immediate surrounds. The building is orientated with large portions of its façade facing to the north providing for good solar access and thermal gain, and the west facing façade is orientated to a major road which means a reduction in the level of glazing would be complimentary to noise mitigation methods. The facility provides a number of outdoor spaces, that are at present are largely unused. Along with opening the facility to public engagement, there exists an opportunity open the space up to the outside environment and make better use of these spaces. The Coorparoo facility in Brisbane includes two outdoor spaces, which provide amenity to employees and in an activity based workplace, could be utilised as workspaces. The use of a second skin and screening systems could address issues of glare, at the same time providing a better internal environment than is currently provided by the use of tinted films.
The first phase of this study described preliminary recommendations and guiding principles that could be used to develop further design responses. The process of prototyping and testing a design in a specific situation has drawn on these preliminary findings and expanded them into a series of design concepts that organise the design prototype. Here we revisit the guidelines from phase one, map them against elements of the prototype design and expand them into a series of key design concepts that can be applied to this and other Vision Australia projects.

4 KEY CONCEPTS

DIAGRAM: Diagram showing location of unmovable cores and key structure in the existing building at Kooyong
Clients and Staff

An open and flexible workspace that does not separate clients from staff is a core principle of a person centred and activity based workplace. In order to do this it is necessary to minimise the amount of ‘back of house’ space and effectively open a lot of the activities of the site to the public.

This design has minimised or condense enclosed or divided space. Meeting spaces, offices and other traditionally partitioned areas have either been opened up, or integrated into pods that are shared and not specific to a given department or person. Only storage, bathrooms, consulting rooms, and plant have been separated from the main open floor for privacy. Where possible these are clustered against fixed circulation & service cores.

DIAGRAM: Idea diagram showing compression of ‘Back of House’ Space
The Public Office

The organisation opening more to the public has driven the research and re-organisation of the Kooyong site. The existing complex has a number of programs that open to the public, or a public engagement (such as the radio). These are extensively staffed by volunteers or have potential to be made spatially public. An expression of public engagement contributes strongly to the ambitions of Vision Australia to be a person centred organisation. The design greatly increases the public interface of the organisation and reduces the separation of the workplace’s staff, its clients and the general public.

The Contemporary Library

The library has been considered the central public asset to the site in this design. As a state funded library it is obliged to be publicly accessible. This institutional program has undergone radical change over the last 20 years, moving from a book repository to an open public space. Vision Australia’s outreach programs are very well positioned already as a public interface. A substantial opportunity exists to develop a facility that serves as an archive and lending service for low-vision resources, but also a ‘public room’ that provides a space for a wide range of people to engage with different media, to meet and participate in public activities.

PHASE TWO - MAY 2015

IMAGE: Photograph of the public reading area at the Sendai Mediatheque in Sendai, Japan
Distributed Network

The Vision Australia property network is a decentralised arrangement of sites located all over the eastern seaboard. There is a large amount of redundancy in the network, and many aspects of the organisation are duplicated or semi-autonomous. The future development strategy for Vision Australia’s sites could consider a process of consolidation of key functions, and the potential for different activities to be further decentralised by providing a kiosk or pop-up model that can operate inside a building or public space.

Outdoor areas

Opening the workplace up to the outside environment aligns with the move toward opening the site up to the public. The Kooyong site is well situated for solar access, and for views onto parkland and the Kooyong Tennis Club. The under-used outdoor balcony spaces turned into screened outdoor rooms take this opportunity. The problems of glare management, shelter and shade are addressed by exterior screens and blinds giving a near face to the street corner and a new openness to interiors.
Pop-up Types

Phase two of the project has focused on the development of a design prototype using the Kooyong site as a case study. As such it has not expanded upon many of the preliminary guidelines for the broader network in phase one. However within the design of the site itself we have sought to test a number of key concepts that could be used across the network and beyond, and could provide solutions for working across large distances and a distributed network.

The design has sought to be make use of stand-alone or pop-up type systems for areas of the project that are commonly included in Vision Australia’s sites. This includes meeting spaces, quiet zones, work pods and other semi-enclosed spaces. The joinery for the retail space units have been designed with the potential to not only be rolled out in Vision Australia sites, but also to possibly be implemented in public settings. Drawing on the model of the pop-up kiosk, the design is standardised and repeatable, but also can be locked down and opened up and makes use of the Vision Australia branding and logos to identify it.

Integration with Partners

As a way of consolidating and making best use of the floor area at Vision Australia sites, the guidelines recommended partnering arrangements with allied bodies to ensure that the large amount of flexible use floor space is being utilised as much as possible. This could also involve the space being offered to external groups on a short term or one off basis, leveraging the central and accessible aspects of most of Vision’s sites.
Multi-function & event spaces

The design proposes the recasting of the community outreach spaces as multi-function and event spaces. Without the removal of existing community activities on site, the use of the spaces could be expanded to accommodate a range of additional uses. These could include:

- large scale meetings and AGM’s for the organisation
- social gatherings, functions and events (internally & externally to VA)
- Conferences and larger presentations (internally & externally to VA)

The provision of a separate public address for the multi-function & event space is crucial to this proposal, along with kitchen and wet area access. By providing a separate address the space would be able to be easily accessed after hours, or by groups not affiliated with Vision Australia.

DIAGRAM: Aerial plan view showing different configurations of proposed re-design of community centre to become meeting and events space
Identifiable Arrangements

The activity based workplace relies on the ability of staff to move freely within the building to work at the location that best suits the activity they are undertaking on any given day. This principle extends to the broader network of Vision Australia, which has a large number of staff that are mobile or working between sites. In order to accommodate this the architecture and other infrastructure must be designed to be familiar, repeatable and easily identifiable so staff are able to arrive and start working with a minimum of effort. This is particularly important for staff and clients with low vision.

DIAGRAM: Idea diagram showing standardised working arrangements
Standardised Workspaces

By removing internal walls the resulting internal space of the building is free to be organised according to different arrangements. While a variety of different configurations have been produced, the range of work spaces has been defined into a limited number of different working types. The different spatial types have been catalogued in the ‘Activity Space Taxonomy’ section of the report.

The types have then been arranged in the plan according to the broader strategy of openness in the design prototype, however it is possible for them to be re-arranged subject to requirement. By providing a limited number of differentiated spatial types it is possible to provide for variety and difference within the working environment while ensuring that staff are familiar at all times with the situation in which they’re working.

Workstation Sharing

With an itinerant work force made up of a large number of casual, part time and volunteer staff, as well as staff that are mobile or work remotely, there is the possibility to make better use of work space by providing for work space sharing arrangements.

IMAGE: Photograph of shared studio space at RMIT Building 45

DIAGRAM: Idea diagram showing allocation of lockers to staff to ensure security of belongings, and enable workstation sharing
Negotiated Workspaces

The design proposes the complete removal of all enclosed office spaces. A number of quiet rooms and one on one meeting pods will remain, however these are commonly bookable. Rooms are located to the centre of the plan to work as space dividers and to create differentiated work zones around them. Workstations are provided in a number of different configurations including ‘traditional’ sit down desks, standing tables and café style informal working areas. All workstations are open to short or medium term use, and lockable storage pods have been indicated in the design, providing a space for staff to store valuable items in a fashion that allows them to move around easily without being attached to any one space.

Flexible Workspaces

As the name suggests flexible workspaces allow for a variety of different configurations, that can accommodate a range of different working arrangements and provide for adaptation to changing scenarios. In the case of Vision Australia this must be designed to include client service spaces which maintain privacy for individuals under consultation, while allowing for an open and flexible planning arrangement.
Flexible, Adaptable and Redundant Infrastructure

Flexibility does not denote an infinite range of possibilities within a workspace, but rather an architectural structure that is capable of variety of different functional usages. Similarly, adaptability refers to the ability of a design to be changed in the future to satisfy changing requirements. Redundant infrastructure refers to the ability of a design to continue functioning without one or more of its constituent parts. The design for the Kooyong prototype attempts to alter the existing site conditions to provide a flexible, adaptable workspace with a degree of redundancy. The primary means by which this has been achieved has been through the removal of internal walls and partitions, the consolidation of services and structure and the provision of an open and flexible architectural infrastructure onto which are variety of different configurations can be plotted.

Activity Zones

The removal of walls and offices, and the implementation of a shared workspace structure does not mean the plan is without hierarchy. The workspace has been organised around a series of performative activity zones. Rather than clustering around departmental or logistical formations, the plan is demarcated according to the actual activities taking place in the workspace. The design of these spaces has taken into account the physical requirements of these activities including amongst other things acoustics, access and proximity to other activities. It is important to note, however, that in most cases the plan is able to accommodate multiple activities without major adjustment. This is explored later in the ‘Flexibility, Adaptability and Redundancy’ section of this report.
Open Plan Spaces

In order to design and open plan flexible workspace to accommodate the needs of staff and clients with low-vision or blindness the design must provide a regular arrangement that works that is consistent and, where possible, avoids irregular shapes and curves. A grid or grid-like arrangement provides an easy to navigate system that is predictable and allows the user to map the space making reasonable assumptions about how the site is organised. A percentage of the floor space must be fixed in place and provide permanent ‘anchors,’ particularly around through ways and passage ways – aiding the user in echo location, environmental orientation and other navigation techniques. The Kooyong site is fundamentally compromised insofar as it is an amalgamation of different bits of built fabric, is made up of a warren of connections and is organised around a series of spaces that are convoluted and do not have easily navigable direct connections.

Integrated Technology

The design allows for integrated technology to be included in the implementation of the prototype, however no specific recommendations of technologies have been made at this point. Broadly the removal of internal partitions and the move towards an activity based scenario demands a move towards cloud based or wireless information technology systems. Moreover the relocation or Audio and Radio facilities could prompt a re-evaluation of the current technical systems in operation, and the adoption of less space intensive and more cost effective digital platforms.

IMAGE: Photograph of RMIT University VX Lab showing largescreen teleconferencing facilities

DIAGRAM: Showing open plan working spaces designed around a regular ‘grid’ and incorporating semi fixed furniture components for wayfinding.

PHASE TWO - MAY 2015
Highways, Islands and Signposts

The design seeks to clear out many of the obstructions that provide navigation obstacles on the site. In replacing this we have proposed a network of ‘highways’ around the building which are demarcated by high contrast hard surfaces that are edged where possible by fixed furniture and joinery elements. Workspaces are configured as a series of ‘islands’ within this system that are organised in a regular grid structure, and orientated around build in ‘pods’ containing meeting, quiet working and consultation spaces. While many of the internal walls have been removed in order to provide for flexibility in the design, the structural columns have been retained and developed to be ‘wayfinding’ elements that use colour and form to define different spaces within the plan.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram identifying ‘highway’ - colour and material defined pathways through the facility for wayfinding purposes
5 DESIGN PROPOSAL
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing first floor office space - Illustrating the distinct floor & ceiling ‘Highways’ and columns for navigating open space
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing reception & radio - more informal meeting and working space with clear pathways (existing circular corridor on right)
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing reception & Retail - Community Area - greater connection with courtyard space
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing informal working area adjacent to cafe. Cafe walls have been removed to further integrate it into the public space of the building.
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing atrium void - space becomes shared informal work space and waiting area for client services
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing technology workspaces with meeting / quiet working pod and kitchen space adjacent
IMAGE: Rendered perspective showing meeting and events space that can be used as a large hall, or subdivided to form smaller meeting areas and rooms.
ACTIVITY SPACE TAXONOMY

The design of an activity based workplace is predicated upon the shift from departmental or operational zoning, to an organisation through which space is arranged according to broad categories of use.

The prototype design for the Kooyong site is based upon the current range of activities that take place on the site. Allowing for some additional uses that might overflow from the Macaulay site, the intention with the prototype was the match like for like.

The following section breaks the design prototype down into a series of constituent parts and analyses them according to their component make up, as well as their spatial requirements and the activities they accommodate.

The activity space taxonomy provides a pattern book for different activity spaces that might be deployed through either the Kooyong or other sites.
WORKSHOP SPACES

PLANS: Showing workshop space types and areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space Type</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boardroom</td>
<td>42.8m²</td>
<td>12 Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Area</td>
<td>14.7m²</td>
<td>4 Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting room 2</td>
<td>13.8m²</td>
<td>2-4 Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustable Workbench</td>
<td>(with storage below)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2050 x 3200 x 700-900 mm

DIAGRAM: Aerial plan showing quiet meeting pods subdivided
MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE

PLANS: Showing multi-purpose space types and areas

Large Use Spaces 1 & 2
Area: 86 m²

Bookable Space for larger Meetings
Informal Functions

Smaller Informal Spaces
Adaptable through movable partitions
Area: 25m² Each

DIAGRAM: Aerial plan showing two Large Rooms in combination to form larger Function Space
Area: 247 m²
CLIENT SERVICES

DIAGRAM: Aerial plan showing quiet meeting and client services pods subdivided

PLANS: Showing client services space types and areas

Boardroom
Rooms 3 & 4
Area: 42.8m²
Area: 18.4 m²
12 Staff
Provision for meeting of 8 Staff or Client Services Appointments

Rooms 5 & 6
Area: 16m²

Adjustable Workstations
Half Size Workstation
Ear Chair
LIBRARY SERVICES

PLANS: Showing library space types and areas

- Book Stacks
- Informal Reading Space
- Individual Study Desks
- Library Reception
- Reading Space

Area: 250 m²
RADIO & AUDIO SERVICES

PLANS: Showing radio & audio space types and areas

Large Audio & On-Air Studios

Medium Studio & Control Rooms

Medium Studio Rooms

Processing & Storage

Studio & Control Rooms

Store

Processing & Production
CAPACITY & BENCHMARKING

FLOOR AREA

Ground Floor: 3300m²
Upper Floor East: 571m²
Upper Floor West: 814m²
Total area (planned) = 4114m²
Total area (NET) = 4685m²

OCCUPATION CAPACITY

Ground Floor Workstations 116
Upper Floor Workstations 64
Ground Floor Casual & meeting Seats 94
Upper Floor Casual & meeting Seats 60
Reception /Library/ Retail  8
Cafe: 4
Visitors
Casual & Meeting (25% of 94) 24
Library/Retail/ Reception 20
Cafe: Assume 10
Conference & Seminar 96
Assume 50% Occupancy 48
Upper Floor Casual & Meeting Seats 60
Assume 25%  15
Upper Floor east 571m²
@ 15m²/person  38 people

DENSITY BENCHMARKING

Occupy Total Floor Area
@ 180 staff
Density = 26m²/person

180 Staff (workstations)
as shown planned
Density = 22.8m² / person

248 Staff Flexible Use
Density = 16.8m² / person

Victorian State govt guidelines
Density = 15m²/person

Enhanced Victorian State govt Guidelines  Density = 12m²/person

Australian Standard minimum
Density 10m² / person

OCCUPATION
1. Workspaces: traditional Dedicated desks for each staff member and selected enclosed offices.
2. Hybrid Shared Workspace: increased proportion of shared space for working; decrease workstation size. no dedicated enclosed offices
3. Shared Workstations:
   staff sharing workstations based on work patterns
4. Activity based work:
   all spaces flexible based on work patterns. no fixed allocations.

DIAGRAM: Diagrams on this page show total floor area, total occupant capacity in the space, and compare occupation density against known benchmarks
FLEXIBLE CAPACITY: ADD PEOPLE

180 Workstations for Staff (22.8m² / person)

Include 25% of casual space as flexible work point: adds 23 staff (20.2m²/person)

Include workstation sharing for 25% staff (flexible & part time): add 45 staff (density = 16.6 m²/person)

Total expanded CAPACITY 248 STAFF

@ 12m²/ person: CAPACITY = 342 staff

FLEXIBLE CAPACITY: ADD AREA

180 Staff @ 15m²/Person = 2700 m²  1414 m² Free Floorspace

3300m² (Ground Floor)  180 Staff @ 18.33M²/Person

1385 m² (Upper floors)  115 Staff @ 12m²/Person

SUMMARY

This data assumes a planned mix of allocated workstations, informal meeting & public program the allocated workstations determine density calculations given this mix, and occupation density is relatively low. This should not be considered fixed. The configuration approach has significant capacity to increase density through modes of use. These include: use of informal spaces as flexible work points shared use of workstations as flexible staff work points. Potential benefits include: increased occupation by enlarged staff cohort co-occupation by allied organisations or tenants expanded spaces for key public functions.

DIAGRAM: Diagrams on this page show potential for expansion of staff numbers accommodated and/or potential consolidation of floor space to allow for leasing of unused space.
8 FLEXIBILITY, ADAPTABILITY & REDUNDANCY

Despite being well located within its host city, close to public transport and easily accessible for low vision clients and staff accessing the site, Vision Australia’s Kooyong Headquarters is one of the more challenging buildings in the organisation’s property portfolio.

The building is a composite of a number of earlier structures that have been renovated and connected through a more recent addition. The later design includes a prominent drop-off and turn circle, which is helpful in terms of providing vehic...The contemporary workspace is defined as much as anything by the continual change and regeneration that has taken place over the last 50 years. In particular, technological developments have drastically affected the spatial requirements of workplaces, as well as the ways in which business is conducted. Many of the workplace features that were considered critical to the operation of the workplace 10 years ago are no longer needed, necessitating costly refurbishment, remedial work or office relocations. Even within a shorter timeframe the status, structure and operational requirements of an organisation can change drastically and without a degree of flexibility in working environments this can result in compromised workplaces or expensive transitions.

Even the most flexible design cannot accommodate every eventuality, nor can it predict the course of future developments. However, it can allow for a degree of flexibility through the modelling of future scenarios, and the provision of spaces that are not functionally specific, but rather that provide a broad range of possible occupational arrangements. Similarly, an adaptable is one that lends itself easily to modification and change. Finally, redundancy in design refers to the provision of space that as either surplus to direct requirement and is therefore open to a variety of uses, or a spatial arrangement that is designed in such a way that part of it can be eliminated from the design and it will continue to function properly – effectively meaning that an office arrangement does not need to be preserved in its ‘complete’ state to operate efficiently.

These three principles have been included in the design for the Kooyong site in various different ways. While by no means exhaustive, the potential of the prototype to accommodate change has been tested and modelled through a series of hypothetical scenarios. While the scenarios are largely arbitrary, they are designed to reflect both change within the current organisational structure of the site, as well as more radical changes in the occupation of Kooyong or of the mission of Vision Australia.

For clarity the changes have been diagrammed on the ground floor only, however the upper level has been considered in the hypothetical scenario.
FIXED ELEMENTS & FREE SPACE

Through the design process a number of fixed components of the existing site conditions were identified. These included stair, lift and service cores, as well as light wells and other infrastructural components of the building.

The remaining space was considered to be open and changeable, with walls being made of up light weight and non-structural systems.

The operational requirements of Vision Australia, including the provision of sound isolated spaces for radio & audio production, private spaces for client consultation and the sub-let food preparation area for the cafe are largely considered to be ‘fixed’ or non-flexible elements within the plan.

The remaining space shown within the boundary is effectively flexible space that can accommodate a range of different activity based scenarios.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram showing fixed function spaces and service/core spaces in the proposed design
CURRENT PLAN ARRANGEMENT

The current arrangement includes a diverse distribution of spatial types across the plan. It is loosely based on the current situation at Kooyong, along with the projected consolidation of activities from other sites.

The layout seeks to make prominent the ‘public’ components of VA’s operations including the library, radio, client services and community outreach spaces.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram functional arrangement of proposed design
HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 1

This scenario includes a consolidation of the ‘workstation’ activity, which can loosely be described as office work.

Office space would include provision for a variety of different working arrangements including meeting areas, quiet working, standup working, group working and individual work stations.

In this scenario office space is consolidated through the north-east and north-west wings of the complex. Informal working space is placed between the radio/audio area, and the office space.

The radio/audio area is supported by a ‘workshop’ space surrounding it.
HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 2

In this scenario the ‘workshop’ or technical areas of the facilities have been greatly reduced. Sound production and quiet areas are limited to the radio/audio zone, supported by a small workshop adjacent.

Client services have been moved to the north-east wing, supported by additional office space.

Informal work spaces have been increased, taking over part of the office space in the north-west wing. The informal spaces are placed adjacent to formal working areas to provide overflow or noisy working areas.

The reception/retail space is increased to include areas in front of the lift core.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram showing hypothetical adaptation of proposed design
HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 3

In this scenario the complex is divided to separate office working activities and other activities - with the exception of the radio/audio zone which is fixed.

Client services are relocated to the north-east wing.

The amount of informal working space is reduced down to only be adjacent to the client services area.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram showing hypothetical adaptation of proposed design
RADICAL SCENARIO - ALL ‘PRIVATE’ FUNCTIONS

This and the following scenarios model radical changes to the mission statement and organisation of Vision Australia.

In this scenario, the site includes only ‘back of house’ activities and provides no public interface beyond the reception/cafe.

Informal workspace has been removed. The functional profile of the site has been adjusted to include only conventional office space and production/workshop areas.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram showing hypothetical adaptation of proposed design
RADICAL SCENARIO - ALL ‘PUBLIC’ FUNCTIONS

In this scenario, the Kooyong site becomes effectively a HUB for public engagement with Vision Australia. As a result the activities that require public engagement have been consolidated and radically increased.

The north-east wing becomes a hub for client services.

The south-east corner becomes a multi-purpose meeting, conference, event, or class space with a separate point of access at either end.

The radio/audio area is increased and occupy the entire south-west corner.

The library occupies the entire north-west wing, across both levels.

Informal working space glues the disparate zones together.

DIAGRAM: Plan diagram showing hypothetical adaptation of proposed design
RADICAL SCENARIO - 50% REDUCTION OF SPACE

This scenario hypothesises a radical reduction in the spatial requirements of Vision Australia. This is explored through a configuration in which the complex is divided in two, and more than 50% of the floor space is being occupied by a separate tenant (in this case using the site for office space).

All the existing activities of the site can be accommodated in the reduced plan - albeit with reduced floor area.

The configuration allows for the preservation of direct public access to the key public activities - radio, library, client services, events, cafe.

The cafe and reception could potentially be shared between Vision Australia and the new tenant.
REFLECTIONS AND BROADER APPLICATION

This design study has addressed a series of questions around Activity Based Work applied to the particular needs of the vision impaired, and the particular needs of the organization of Vision Australia.

The methodology of a design prototype approaches these questions in the location of the Kooyong facilities, with its precise needs and existing set of conditions.

The design prototype treats this site as both a case study and a flagship exemplar, capable of setting examples to a wider network of locations, but also establish strategies applicable to those varied locations in different ways.

The design prototype represents a snapshot of the range of possibilities in this environment, but also describes the capacity for flex built into the plan. As far as possible the design caters for the elaboration, development and change of the organisation through modes of use.

The design has considerable capacity to generate transformation within the organization if coupled with an open approach to its possible uses. It also has considerable capacity for more occupation and more activities with intensified use.

We have developed the eight principles set out in the phase one report and mapped these to specific designed outcomes. These are elaborated in the Key Concepts section and summarized below.

Clients and Staff - the Public Office: A series of ground floor public functions define the experience: library café and retail are opened to a circulation promenade; radio moves to ground level and integrates with AIS. Outdoor spaces on upper level are screened creating better access to them from inside and greater identity from outside.

Distributed Network- Pods and Pop-ups: These small types serve as repeatable units across the network, and are potentially relocatable within that network.

Integration with Partners - Sharable gathering spaces: Informal meetings are emphasised; the multi-purpose spaces are cast as conference workshop facilities; consolidation of facilities opens opportunities to share and sublet available space to partners.

Identifiable Arrangements: A Standard Workstation configuration is proposed for all areas; differentiated informal spaces are identified through variety; highways as circulation path floor and ceiling treatments, and signposts as column grids support the navigation of spaces.

Workstation Sharing - negotiable work spaces: No closed offices and moved towards a high level of interchange in work settings.

Flexible Workspaces - identified fixed and adaptable Infrastructure: Activity Zones creating differentiation and hierarchy

Open Plan Spaces - minimised enclosures: No narrow openings; highways of floor strips, islands activity; signposts of columns create a navigable open space.

Integrated Technology- Digital integration: Radio, recording and general communications connected and networked. Wifi fully distributed and laptops set consistently for interchanging connection points.
Our experience of engaging with design for vision impairment suggests that most of the principles parallel those of all good design at an acute level. Principles of clarity, legibility and differentiation all apply to navigation, and here they do so with a sense of urgency. The strategies of this study are applicable to a range of locations and special need requirements.

This study and design work has undergone a series of iterations and consultations with a select number of stakeholders. It has also undergone an audit of its spatial efficiency and initial review of the regulatory requirements of its planning.

We have not undertaken review of structure, building services or construction costs; and these would normally take place in a subsequent phase off the design’s development.

We recommend now that a period of wider discussion, and deeper interrogation of particular requirements, inform a response to this draft and its final iteration, and to the instigation of subsequent development.