



Victorian Student
Representative Council

ADVOCACY PLATFORM

2023



ABOUT VICSRC

Victorian Student Representative Council LTD was created by students to be a voice for students at the highest levels of decision making in Victorian education.

ABOUT VICSRC'S ADVOCACY

VicSRC's Advocacy Platform is a collection of key ideas from students to solve the big issues at the heart of the Victorian education system, all centred on including students in education decision making.

This Advocacy Platform starts at VicSRC Congress every year. Secondary students from across Victoria come together for the day to pitch their big ideas for education and vote in a top ten to become VicSRC's advocacy priorities for the next twelve months. Students then split into Action Teams to start creating the Action Plans for these top ten ideas.

VicSRC Congress is one of the only events by and for students, with students designing, hosting and facilitating the event.

After Congress, the VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee (Executive Committee), and any other students who want to join, complete the Action Plans through a series of online Advocacy Planning Workshops over five weeks.

From here, the Executive Committee focus on advocating for these ideas to become reality over their term.

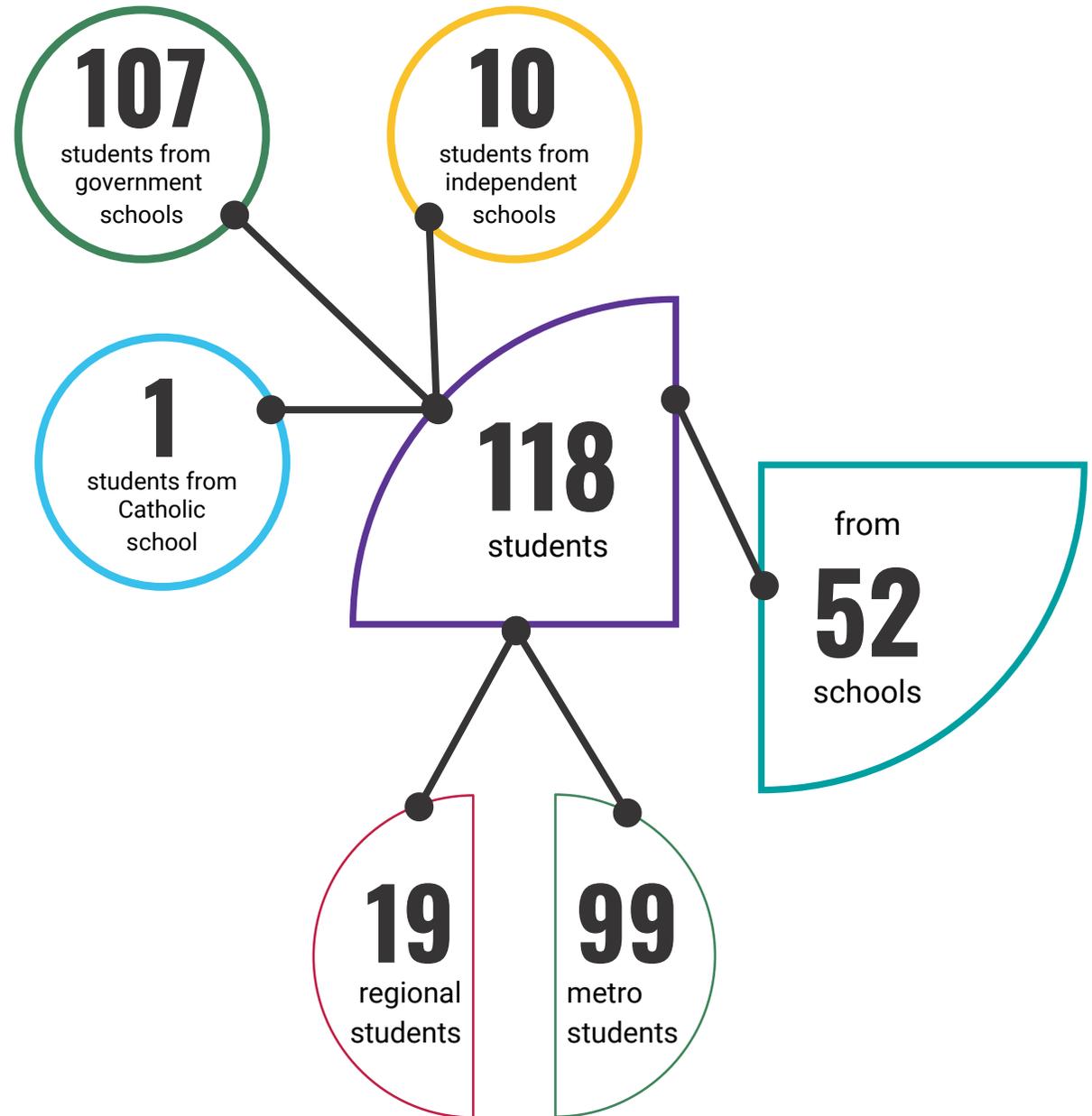


VicSRC's annual advocacy cycle

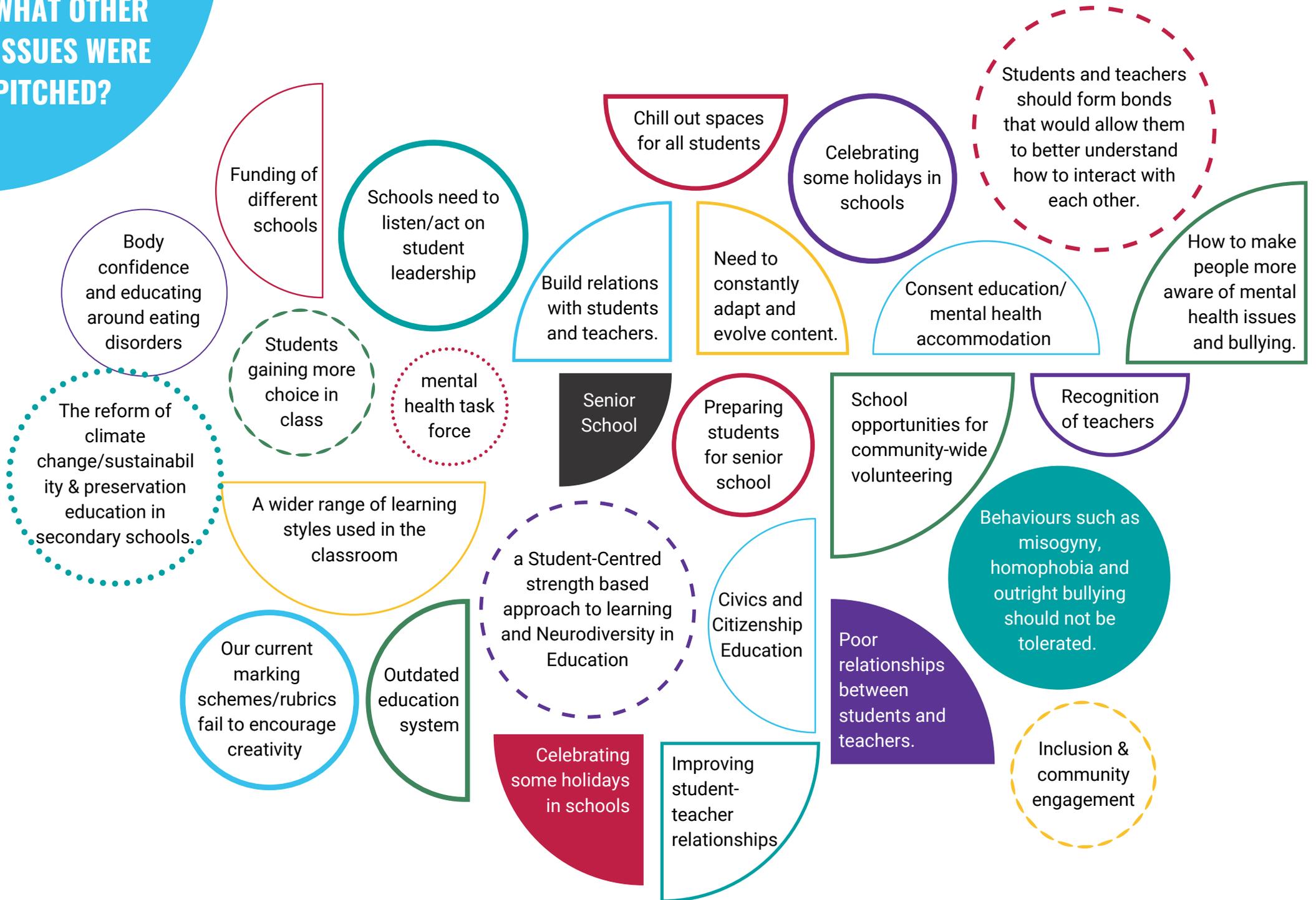
CONGRESS AT A GLANCE

THE TOP ISSUES

- Trauma-informed schools
- Student mental health taskforce
- Free public transport for students
- Inclusive Indigenous Initiative
- Learn your style
- Normalising neurodiversity
- Better electoral education (Politics 101.2)
- Solid sleep = school success
- Stress free VCE
- Student informed consent professional learning



WHAT OTHER ISSUES WERE PITCHED?



ACTIONS:

EDUCATION USES TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE!
TEACHERS HAVE TRAINING THAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED.

ISSUES:

LACK of UNDERSTANDING.

ACTIONS:

ALIGN CYCLES and TIMETABLES.
LEARN ABOUT SLEEP and STRATEGIES in SCHOOL.
MORE FLEXIBLE BREAKS.

ACTIONS:

MAKE IT free For STUDENTS TO GET TO SCHOOL + RELATED ACTIVITIES.
FREE for REGIONAL + RURAL STUDENTS.

ACTIONS:

SPECIFIC FUNDING AND RESOURCES for ABORIGINAL LED SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

ACTIONS:

CO-DESIGN EXAM TIMETABLES.

ISSUES:

ACADEMIC SUCCESS PRIORITISED OVER MENTAL WELLBEING.

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA of COVID-19 LockDowns.

ISSUES:

SCHOOL TIMETABLES DON'T ALIGN.
DIFFERENT TEEN SLEEP CYCLES.
POOR SLEEP = POOR PERFORMANCE.

ISSUES:

NOT AFFORDABLE for ALL STUDENTS.
COST CAN IMPACT ACCESS + ATTENDANCE.

ACTIONS:

LEARN and SHARE HISTORY.
DEDICATED GROUP ADVISES RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT.

INCLUDE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCORES.

RANKING IS STRESSFUL and UNFAIR!

PRESSURE OF VCE IS CAUSING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES!

TRAUMA INFORMED SCHOOLS

SOLID SLEEP = SCHOOL SUCCESS

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT PASS for AN EDUCATION

INCLUSIVE INDIGENOUS INITIATIVE

LACK of CONNECTION WITH LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES.

LACK of LOCAL ENGAGEMENT ON HISTORY and PLACE.

RACISM and IGNORANCE.

ACTIONS:

STUDENT TASK FORCE TO REPORT TO GOV.

ISSUES:

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN SCHOOLS.

STUDENT LED MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

VicsRC CONGRESS 2022

STRESS FREE VCE

NORMALISING NEURODIVERSITY

ISSUES:

STIGMA.
LACK of UNDERSTANDING.
STUDENTS DISADVANTAGED.
NOT GETTING THE EDUCATION THEY NEED.

ACTIONS:

TEACHERS TRAINED TO SUPPORT.
STUDENT FOCUSED.
NEURODIVERSE SUPPORT.
DET-INFORM STUDENTS on POLICY and PRACTICE.

INVESTIGATE WHAT WORKS.

SUPPORT IS NOT SUFFICIENT.

NOT ASKED WHAT WE NEED, but WE KNOW!

STUDENT TASK FORCE IS UNIQUE in AUSTRALIA

NOT ASKED for FEEDBACK.

ISSUES:

VOTING IS SCARY and CONFUSING!

POLITICS 101.2

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

LEARN YOUR STYLE

ISSUES:

ONE-SIZE-FITS ALL DOESN'T SUIT EVERYONE!
TEACHING ONE WAY DISCRIMINATES AGAINST SOME STUDENTS.

STUDENTS ACTUALLY TALK TO STUDENTS!

ACTIONS:

COMPULSORY PREFERENTIAL VOTING for STUDENTS.

VOTING EDUCATION HAPPENS TOO EARLY. FORGET IT ALL BY 18!

ELECTORAL EDUCATION NOT PRIORITISED.

VOTE

ISSUES:

BORING and AWKWARD!

LACKS RELEVANCE.

LACK OF TEACHER CONFIDENCE.

ACTIONS:

CO-DESIGN WITH STUDENTS.
DELIVERED in PART BY STUDENTS.

EMBEDDED IN ALL TEACHER TRAINING.

CLEAR INFO GIVEN ON HOW TO VOTE.

SHARE VCAA + VICSRC INFO.

PREVENTS STUDENTS MEETING THEIR FULL LEARNING CAPACITY.

ACTIONS:

INCREASED AGENCY.
EMPOWERED TO FIND PREFERRED WAY of LEARNING.
RESOURCES and TIME TO CO-DESIGN LESSONS.

TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS

The problem

The two years of major disruptions, to education and lives, have led to more students living with trauma but not all schools are trained to deal with this. This can lead to schools being unsafe and further traumatising already vulnerable students.

Key issues

- ✎ Many teachers don't have enough, or any, understanding of trauma-informed practice so they are unable to provide the right supports for students.
- ✎ Students' behaviour is misunderstood because of a lack of awareness and they miss out on learning opportunities as a result.
- ✎ There is not enough focus on trauma informed practice by the system to ensure it's prioritised by ALL schools.
- ✎ Students aren't given skills or strategies to deal with ongoing affects of trauma so the impact can increase.

Result

Students will feel safe and supported at school which will boost attendance, engagement, learning, and mental health outcomes.

Actions

- ☑ All schools need funding and support to participate in regular trauma informed education training.
- ☑ Schools need to acknowledge trauma and the impact it can have so students feel safe to talk about it.
- ☑ Teachers need to provide regular and timely trigger warnings before discussing potentially upsetting topics and schools need to provide support for students to explore these topics safely.
- ☑ Schools need to provide opportunities for students to safely disclose triggering areas so teachers can be proactive in co-designing safe lessons with students around these areas.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH TASKFORCE

The problem

Students aren't getting the support they need at school to deal with increasing problems with their mental health.

Key issues

- 👉 Teachers don't always have the appropriate skills and understanding to support students' mental health.
- 👉 Students don't always understand what mental health is and how to prioritise it in themselves or in their friends.
- 👉 There isn't the opportunity for students to regularly provide guidance or feedback about mental health programs and initiatives in schools to schools or government.
- 👉 More students are experiencing mental health issues than before but there is still stigma around seeking help.

Result

The government receives timely and relevant feedback from students with current lived experience as to how mental health programs and initiatives are working in schools. This ongoing feedback enables the government, and schools, to adjust programs based on the needs of students right now which will provide better and more targeted support for students at school.

Actions

- ☑ The government needs to establish a student-led mental health task force.
- ☑ Schools need to include students in decision making and evaluation of mental health programs and initiatives in schools.
- ☑ The student-led task force will consult directly with students about their experiences of mental health programs in schools, and report findings and recommendations to government on a regular basis.
- ☑ The government will respond to the student-led task force recommendations.

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS

The problem

Paying for public transport to get to school is a barrier for some students and limits their access to education.

Key issues

- ☞ Many students don't have an option to get to school without public transport.
- ☞ Increases to the cost of living are impacting the ability of students to afford public transport.
- ☞ Public education should be free, therefore accessing public education should be free also.
- ☞ Many students are unable to work so they are reliant on families/carers to pay for their public transport which puts pressure on the family budget.

Result

Getting to school by public transport is not a barrier for students so attendance and engagement is increased.

Actions

- ☑ Government needs to make travel to and from school (and school related activities) by public transport free for all students.

INCLUSIVE INDIGENOUS INITIATIVE

The problem

Students are not learning about local First Nations Knowledge and Perspectives at school, this means they don't understand the significance of the Country they learn on.

Key issues

- 👉 Schools don't prioritise learning about local First Nations Knowledge and Perspectives.
- 👉 The Department of Education and Training doesn't provide enough support for Aboriginal educators to share their Knowledge with every school in Victoria.
- 👉 Schools do not understand the importance of connecting with local First Nations communities.
- 👉 There is not enough support from the system for schools to embed local Knowledge and Perspectives into multiple curriculum areas.

Result

All students in Victoria have more understanding of the First Nations' Knowledge and Perspectives of the Country they learn on, and the school is better connected with the local Aboriginal Community.

Actions

- ☑ Schools need to collaborate with teachers and local Community on how to embed local Knowledge and Perspectives into schools. First Nations students should be empowered to lead this collaboration where appropriate and possible
- ☑ Government needs to provide extra funding to support local First Nations Knowledge and Perspectives in schools.
- ☑ Non-Aboriginal students need to share their knowledge and perspectives they have learned with peers and families to reduce the cultural load on Aboriginal Communities.
- ☑ Government needs to extend the current Aboriginal Community Understanding and Safety Training to include students.

LEARN YOUR STYLE

The problem

Teachers usually only teach their classes in one way, but students have different ways they prefer receiving and processing information. This means that if the teaching style doesn't align with the way students learn best, they will be disadvantaged and potentially miss out on learning, opportunities and information.

Key issues

- 👉 Teachers don't have time to understand or adapt their classes to suit individual student needs.
- 👉 Students often aren't supported to understand how they receive and process information most effectively.
- 👉 Schools aren't prioritising codesigning learning with students, so it is up to the teacher to decide what delivery is best.
- 👉 There is misunderstanding around what students mean by "learning styles" so this topic is not seriously discussed by decision makers.

Result

All students are engaged in learning, have better academic outcomes, and feel like they belong in school.

Actions

- ☑ VIT, DET and preservice teacher educators need to provide more support for teachers to explore different styles of delivery and co-design with students.
- ☑ Schools need to provide time and resourcing for teachers to plan classes with students.
- ☑ Teachers need to provide learning outcomes and facilitate different ways of learning to support individual students to meet the outcomes in their own way.
- ☑ Schools need to take a holistic approach to the curriculum and enable learning to happen in different ways across the school.

NORMALISING NEURODIVERSITY

The problem

Students' health, wellbeing and education is suffering because there is not enough understanding about neurodiversity.

Key issues

- 👉 The research is relatively new and not as accessible as it should be.
- 👉 Teachers don't learn about neurodiversity leading to a lack of understanding and support for neurodiverse students.
- 👉 Students feel left out and like they don't belong at school.
- 👉 Stigmas and misconceptions about neurodiversity lead to discrimination and bullying.

Result

All students feel like they belong at school and can learn effectively because everyone understands what neurodiversity means.

Actions

- ☑ All levels of the education system need to participate in education about neurodiversity and what it means for learning.
- ☑ Schools need to participate in regular training to understand and raise awareness of neurodiversity.
- ☑ Government needs to create a cross-sector neurodiversity-in-schools reference group including students to guide policy and practice.
- ☑ Schools need to collaborate with current and past neurodiverse students to create accessible environments and learning opportunities.

BETTER ELECTORAL EDUCATION

Politics 101.2

The problem

Students don't understand how to vote, who to vote for, or why voting is important.

Key issues

- ☞ Most schools don't prioritise civics and citizenship, so students aren't educated on elections and voting.
- ☞ Voting education is inconsistent within and across schools and happens too early in school to be relevant by the time students can vote in local, state or federal elections.

Result

Students will feel confident and informed when voting in Australia's local, state and federal elections, and schools will be more democratic.

Actions

- ☑ All schools to run elections using preferential voting systems for student leadership positions.
- ☑ More resourcing for VEC to support schools to run elections.
- ☑ Candidates and political party members need to prioritise visiting local secondary schools to explain their policies.

SOLID SLEEP = SCHOOL SUCCESS

The problem

Students are not getting enough good quality sleep which is negatively impacting their learning and their mental and physical health.

Key issues

- 👉 School timetables are not compatible with the sleep cycles of teenagers.
- 👉 Students are staying up late studying and finishing assessments because the workload is too heavy and there is too much pressure at school.
- 👉 Anxiety because of school assessments and workload is causing sleep issues.
- 👉 Students who are tired are not able to learn effectively.

Result

Students will be happier, healthier, and learn more effectively.

Actions

- ☑ Schools need to adjust their timetables to allow for students' sleep schedules.
- ☑ Schools need to supply free (or cheap) breakfast and lunch for all students to ensure they have enough energy for the day.
- ☑ Schools need to work in partnership with students to ensure their workload across classes is manageable.
- ☑ Schools need to provide opportunities for students to rest and recharge throughout the day.

STRESS FREE VCE

The problem

The pressure students are feeling about VCE is having a serious negative impact to their mental health and learning outcomes before, during and after VCE.

Key issues

- ☞ Too much importance is placed on exams which don't accurately measure knowledge and understanding of all students.
- ☞ There is too much focus on VCE which means students spend too much time studying and neglect other areas of their lives.
- ☞ Students are only learning what is needed for exams rather than a broad understanding of the curriculum area.
- ☞ The reputation of schools is valued more than the education experience of students.

Result

VCE is an enjoyable experience for all students and they have the opportunity to live a full life during this time.

Actions

- ☑ The government needs to include a reform of VCE academic major stream as part of the current senior secondary reform.
- ☑ Universities need to be more flexible with entry requirements for courses to ensure it's not just based on academic results.
- ☑ Schools need to collaborate with families and students to make sure students have a healthy lifestyle and reduce stress.
- ☑ The broader community needs to work together to change the messaging around VCE so that a few exams at the end of 13 years of school are not seen as defining education.

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The problem

Consent education is not relevant, consistent, or engaging.

Key issues

- ☞ Consent education is often awkward and uncomfortable for students.
- ☞ Many teachers are not confident discussing consent education so it's not effective education.
- ☞ Some students aren't being taught about consent at all.
- ☞ Students don't understand the importance of consent education.

Result

All students are fully informed about consent and make better decisions because of this. Students feel safer at school and in life because of this understanding.

Actions

- ☑ DET needs to provide funding and opportunity for students to codesign professional learning around consent.
- ☑ Schools need to co-design with students what and how consent is taught.
- ☑ Teachers need to be supported to do regular professional learning in consent education, so they feel confident discussing it.
- ☑ Schools need to ensure consent is discussed in every year level, so no students miss out.

