

# ANNUAL REPORT



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

VicSRC acknowledges that our work takes place on Aboriginal lands never ceded, and that our office sits on the Wurundjeri lands of the Kulin Nation. We recognise and pay respects to all Aboriginal peoples as the custodians of this beautiful country on which we learn, work and grow.

Education is the act of imparting knowledge, and we want to honour First Nations peoples' rich and ancient practices of knowledge sharing and the inextricable link between storytelling, people, and Country.

This land always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

### ABOUT VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council

Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) is the peak body and leading advocate representing school-aged students in Victoria. We were created by students to be a voice for all primary and secondary school students at the highest levels of decision making in Victorian education. Our vision is an education system that is student-led, student driven and student-focused.

We actively promote student voice in all of our work, building the capabilities of government, schools, and community organisations to understand the importance of student voice in policymaking and school leadership, and foster genuine partnerships between education decision makers and students.

We advocate for policies that reflect the needs and priorities of students, working together to ensure students are empowered to lead change in their school communities and at the systemic level.



# CEO & BOARD CHAIR REPORT

VicSRC has experienced a year of immense change and incredible growth which has seen a vibrant new team joining the organisation and building on the great strengths of what was already in place, working towards the vision of an education system that's flexible, relevant and includes all students in all decisions.

In partnership with our Student Executive Advisory Committee, we have continued advocating for student voice in all areas of education decision-making, championing the inclusion of students in critical areas of education reform such as senior secondary education, mental health and wellbeing in schools, and relevant, age-appropriate sex and consent education. Together we have demonstrated the value of investing in student voice and the power of collective action to advocate for an education system that is responsive to the needs of all students.

In late 2022 we farewelled former CEO Nina Laitala, who steered the organisation during an immensely challenging period as the world tried to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Some other long-standing and highly valued staff have also departed in the last year. Our heartfelt thanks goes out to all former staff who have served the organisation for many years, sharing your insights and expertise to ensure the best outcomes for all Victorian students.

2023 kicked off with the appointment of a new CEO, Julia Baron, joining the team with an

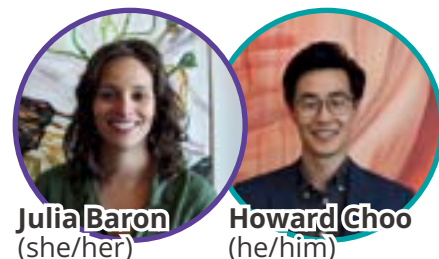
impressive history of youth work and policy development to support her strategic direction of VicSRC over the coming years. We have all loved seeing her bring her vision for the organisation to life since she joined!

We have expanded our capacity in research and policy with the introduction of VicSRC's first Policy and Advocacy Manager, which has already resulted in significant contributions being made to areas such as Vocational Education and Training, accessibility and inclusion for neurodiverse students, and supporting teachers to enable them to focus their time and energy on building rapport with students and providing extra help and care to those in the classroom that need it. This added capacity into research and policy also resulted in the release of our 2023 Congress Report, which was released to incredible reception from the community, and continues to serve as a starting point for our renewed policy platform.

Thanks to the ongoing support from the Victorian Department of Education, we received significant funding to expand our team further with the introduction of several new roles to support exciting new initiatives in 2024. We are so grateful to the department for their continued commitment to student voice across all areas of education, and are thrilled to continue working together to achieve our shared goals.

Exciting things await in 2024 as VicSRC starts to develop a new strategic plan, establish a Community of Practice for those invested in student voice and co-design, launch a newly updated partner schools offering, and expand our in-school program offering to cater to more schools and different student cohorts.

Of course, all this work would not be possible without our Board. It has been a true pleasure to work with such a dedicated and skilled group of people who share their expertise so generously with VicSRC. We thank each of you for your incredible energy and passion, and look forward to continuing our exciting work together over the coming year.



**Julia Baron**  
(she/her)

**Howard Choo**  
(he/him)

## CURRENT MEMBERS



Chair  
**Howard Choo**  
(he/him)



Treasurer  
**Tim Warwick**  
(he/him)



**Brad Bowden**  
(he/him)



**Grace McCoy**  
(she/her)



**James Holland**  
(he/him)



**Giselle Pinto**  
(she/her)

## OUTGOING MEMBERS



**Tom Frick**  
(he/him)



**Dr Eve Mayes**  
(she/her)

# OUR BOARD

# APPRECIATING OUR PARTNERS

We truly believe we achieve more by working in partnership, which is why we are so proud to have the support of all our partners, volunteers, community groups and organisations. The contributions of each and every one of our supporters ensures VicSRC can continue to advocate for improved decision-making in education that centres the experiences and voices of students.

VicSRC extends our gratitude to the outgoing Minister for Education, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, and thanks her team for the ongoing support whilst she oversaw the education portfolio. We are thrilled to be working with Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll MP, and look forward to continued collaboration with his team.

VicSRC wouldn't have the impact it does without the contributions of partner organisations, including the Australian Education Union, the Centre for Multicultural Youth, the Commission for Children and Young People, the Country Education Partnership, Koorie Youth Council, the Monash Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice, Orygen Youth Mental Health, Parents Victoria, Third Culture Australia, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, the Victorian Council of Social Services, and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.

Beyond the ongoing support, we are grateful to the Department of Education for funding projects in senior secondary reform, mental health and wellbeing, and tech schools.

## Partner Schools

Our strong partner schools network drives collective power to achieve better education outcomes for Victorian students. Our partner schools play an integral role in our work, and we thank the following schools for their partnership this year.

Academy of Mary Immaculate  
Albert Park College  
Bendigo South East College  
Black Rock Primary School  
Box Hill High School  
Briar Hill Primary School  
Bunyip Primary School  
Caulfield Primary School  
Chaffey Secondary College  
Clifton Springs Primary School  
Coburg High School  
Edgars Creek Secondary College  
Elwood College  
Featherbrook P-9 College  
Flinders Christian Community College  
Frankston High School  
Hartwell Primary School  
Kew High School  
Lakeview Senior College  
Lalor East Primary School  
Lynall Hall Community School  
Lyndhurst Secondary College  
Maffra Secondary College

Melton West Primary School  
Mernda Central College P-12  
Mickleham Secondary College  
Mount Ridley P-12 College  
Mount Waverley Secondary College  
Northern College of the Arts and Technology  
Northside Christian College  
Oberon High School  
Padua College  
Portland Secondary College  
Roxburgh College  
Springside West Secondary College  
St Brigid's Primary School  
Sunbury College  
Sunshine College  
Tarneit Senior College  
Terang College  
Virtual School Victoria  
Warrnambool College  
Westall Secondary College  
Wyndham Central Secondary College

## Student Members

VicSRC is proud to ensure student voice is at the forefront of everything we do. In addition to our Student Executive Advisory Committee, students who are currently attending school in Victoria from Prep to year 12 are eligible to become a VicSRC Member.

This provides our most important stakeholders – Victorian students – the opportunity to have a say in who makes up the Student Executive Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees, who ultimately oversee the strategic direction of the organisation. Student members are invited to our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and have the opportunity to attend, speak at and vote at the meeting.

We welcome and urge all eligible Victorian students to become members, and more information can be found by scanning the QR code below.



Become a VicSRC Student Member today!





## Department of Education

The Department of Education convenes several networks and governance groups that lead decision-making across a range of areas in education. VicSRC is honoured to work closely with the department across each of these areas:

**Complaints Management Reference Group:** Bringing students' perspectives to the complaints management process within the Department of Education to ensure those processes are accessible for students and take a rights-based approach so students know how to raise their voice when they have concerns.

**LGBTIQA+ Education Reference Group:** Helping to guide the government's initiatives which aim to improve the learning, wellbeing, and safety of LGBTIQA+ Victorian students at school.

**Mental Health in Schools Reform Advisory Group:** Overseeing the implementation and impacts of the Victorian Government's ongoing reforms to mental health and wellbeing support for students at school.

**Marrung Central Governance Committee:** Joining other key education stakeholders from government and community to oversee the 2016-2026 Marrung strategy, designed to boost engagement and outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in Victoria.

**National Schools Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group:** Collaborating with stakeholders from across Australia to provide feedback into the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.

**Respectful Relationships Advisory Group:** Tracking the outcomes of the Respectful Relationships program and working to improve engagement and outcomes for both students and their families and communities.

**Senior Secondary Reform Advisory Group:** Providing advice and guidance to inform the Victorian Government's ongoing reforms to senior secondary education.



## Resources and Policy Updates

Over the course of the last 18 months, VicSRC has had the opportunity to contribute to the following resources and policies, ensuring all relevant resources are centring student voice and providing ongoing opportunities for student feedback and input:

**Catching On Now and Catching On Later teaching and learning materials:** Providing students with opportunities to engage directly with academics and the government to strengthen the curriculum around sexuality education for Victorian students.

**Department of Education policy and guidance for schools regarding vaping:** Emphasising the need for a wellbeing-focused response to vaping and reaffirming students' rights regarding searches and seizures of property.

**Respectful Relationships teaching and learning materials:** Ensuring that these materials are responsive to the needs of students while also being relevant, engaging, and clear.

**Student-focused resources for raising complaints at school:** Providing students with a clear, accessible, and less intimidating pathway to raise formal complaints within their schools, and reminding them of their rights and due process.

## Events

- Positive Schools Summit
- The Age Schools Summit
- VCOSS Treasurer's Luncheon
- Education Equity Alliance Social Lab
- SEC Energy Jobs and Skills Forum
- Make It 16 Victorian Campaign Launch
- Banyule City Youth Summit
- Australian Council for Student Voice (ACSV) Achievements and Challenges Seminar
- VCOSS Voices of Victoria Listening Tour: Report Launch
- ANROWS Respectful Relationships Research Launch
- Victorian Government's "Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy" Launch
- Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools Student Wellbeing Conference
- 2023 STEM Centres End of Year Forum
- National Education Summit



## Research and Public Inquiries

VicSRC conducted student-led research across multiple areas, and made submissions to the following Inquiries:

- Federal Inquiry into the status and perception of Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- Federal Inquiry into assessment and support services for people with ADHD
- VET Delivered to School Students (VDSS): Surveying VET Student Attitudes and Reflections On VET At School
- 2023 Congress Report
- Parliamentary Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria

# 2022-23 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

The 2022-2023 Student Executive Advisory Committee was such an interesting, yet busy experience and we saw a lot of change at VicSRC.

There is so much to report back on, because all fifteen of us were involved in so many exciting opportunities in advocacy, communications and more across the year.

Executive Committee members attended multiple meetings with The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, the then-Victorian Minister for Education, in which we discussed our advocacy priorities that came from Congress 2022 and gathered her support through the year. The Executive Committee also attended quarterly meetings with the Department of Education to discuss what we could be doing better to improve student voice across all areas of education.

The Executive Committee provided feedback based on their lived and living experience as current secondary school students to multiple government-led advisory groups throughout the year, including the Mental Health in Schools Reform Advisory Group, Respectful Relationships Advisory Group and the LGBTQIA+ Education Reference Group.

There were plenty of opportunities to network with various stakeholders this year, as many Executive Committee members attended a number of

events where we met politicians, union leaders and education experts. Events such as the SEC Energy Jobs and Skills forum and The Age Schools Summit allowed members of the Executive Committee to present on panels and as key note speakers to advocate for student voice to hundreds of people. Throughout the year, Executive Committee members were able to experience being interviewed live by the media and engaging in conversations with teachers, politicians, various people from the Department of Education and community sector stakeholders about the importance of student voice in education.

The 2022-2023 Executive Committee was also lucky enough to take part in what will hopefully be the beginning of many opportunities to promote student voice at the national level. Four Executive Committee members (including myself) were elected to be on the National Student Voice Council (NSCV) to represent Victoria, forming part of the inaugural team. The NSCV was established in the hopes of engaging student representatives from across the country to provide insight to the federal and state governments on many areas of education. The National Student Voice Council will continue to run in 2024, and Executive Committee members will continue to engage and provide feedback nationally about the importance of student voice.

I was personally very privileged to attend the Ministerial Reference Group meetings for the National Schools Reform Agreement in June 2023 in Canberra and again in October 2023 in Hobart. I was able to speak to stakeholders in education from across the country, including Ministers for Education from other states, and was honoured to represent the students of Victoria, providing insight on the three main issues established by the panel. At these meetings, I learned about how important student voice and agency truly is in education and highlighted to the attendees how important it was to continuously engage with a wide group of students to provide feedback.

The 2022-2023 Executive Committee also had the pleasure of hosting our 2023 Congress event at Wurun Senior Campus and had a total of 113 students in

attendance. The facilitators for the day were members of the Executive Committee, some alumni Executive Committee members and some of our 2023 VicSRC Ambassadors. There were three training days provided prior to Congress which gave us the chance to learn more about facilitation and how to do it effectively. This helped us to provide attendees with safe spaces to express their concerns about the advocacy priorities that were established.

A review into the role of, and support provided to, the Student Executive Advisory Committee was also carried out in 2023 through consultations with the members of the 2022-2023 Student Executive Advisory Committee, the Board of Trustees and VicSRC staff. Over the years the role and responsibilities of the Executive Committee has grown and morphed into something quite different from its original intention, and it was decided that a review should be conducted to ensure the Executive Committee was being adequately supported to lead VicSRC and focus our energy on the areas we felt most important to Victorian students. Thirty-three recommendations were made that aim to ensure future Executive Committee teams have a supported, manageable and comfortable term. We all felt validated by the review and excited to see the 2024 Executive Committee begin to carry out the recommendations.

There were a lot of staff changes during our Executive Committee term, including the CEO at the time who resigned after working for VicSRC for a long time, and therefore a brand new staff team needed to be hired. This meant that the Executive Committee were on countless interviewing panels (including to recruit two new Board members), providing us with agency over who was hired and advocating for what qualities were needed for the role. These experiences provided us with stronger connections to both the Board and staff team, providing smoother and more meaningful pathways for communication and collaboration.

Finally, an Executive Committee and Board Partnership handbook was created in 2023 which acts as a tangible resource for the Executive Committee to learn about the Board, what they do, how their meetings run, and what they're responsible for, and for the Board to learn about the Student Executive Advisory Committee. The handbook was created by a member of our Board with significant and ongoing input from the Executive Committee. We then reviewed the handbook as a team and have incorporated it into our induction and training for new Executive Committee members, which has made it easier for the 2024 Student Executive Advisory Committee to attend board meetings without feeling confused.

The 2022-2023 Executive Committee had an incredible term and achieved so much in 2023 both internally and externally. While there was so much happening, I couldn't be more proud of the work we achieved, and feel very excited to be one of the Executive Committee members who have been re-elected for a second term in 2024.



Grace (she/her)  
2022-23 Executive  
Committee Co-Chair



# 2022-23 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



**Anjali**  
(she/her)



**Aleena**  
(she/her)



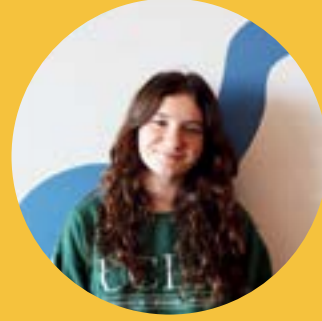
**Arwen**  
(she/her)



**Billy**  
(he/him)



**Eric**  
(he/him)



**Grace**  
(she/her)



**Isabelle**  
(she/her)



**Jem**  
(he/him)



**Joseph**  
(he/him)



**Oak**  
(he/they)



**Sidd**  
(he/him)



**Sienna**  
(she/her)



**Sophia**  
(she/her)



**Taj**  
(he/him)



**Wesley**  
(he/him)



**Anay**  
(he/him)



**Annie**  
(she/her)



**Billy**  
(he/him)



**Darcy**  
(they/them)



**Eric**  
(he/him)



**Garv**  
(he/they)



**Grace**  
(she/her)



**Ivy**  
(she/her)



**Jem**  
(he/him)



**Katherine**  
(she/her)



**Kevin**  
(he/him)



**Marley**  
(he/him)



**Noah**  
(he/him)



**Radha**  
(she/her)



**Risith**  
(he/him)

# 2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



# OUR STAFF



**Julia Baron**  
(she/her)  
CEO



**Abby Wiverton**  
(she/her)  
Communications &  
Marketing Manager



**William Naughton-Gravette**  
(he/him)  
Policy & Advocacy Manager



**Kane Ord**  
(he/him)  
Programs Manager



**Ian Johnson**  
(he/him)  
Finance Manager



**Keisha Healy**  
(she/her)  
Programs Officer



**Chelsea Daniel**  
(she/they)  
Communications &  
Memberships  
Officer



**Riya Rajesh**  
(she/her)  
Policy & Research  
Officer



**Jake Fehily**  
(he/him)  
Community  
Development & Co-  
Design Lead



**Georgia Cutajar**  
(she/her)  
Executive Officer



**1382**

students in the  
VicSRC Student  
Community

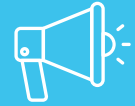


**655**

VicSRC  
Online  
Learning  
enrolments



**18**



appearances  
in the media



**28**

meetings  
between  
Government  
and Executive  
Committee



**1972**

kms travelled  
across the  
state



**116**

Victorian  
schools  
engaged  
with



**435**

social media  
posts



# OUR IMPACT



## We advocate for student-led positive changes in education.

VicSRC is always focused on improving the education system in Victoria to ensure that it is as student-focused as possible. Though we do this in many ways, and while focusing on many different issues, it is the concept of student voice which unites all of our policy and advocacy work.

Student voice is all about achieving meaningful and genuine collaboration between students and adults so that they can work together to create a relevant and beneficial education journey. Here is just a selection of our achievements this year:

**Established the Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Student Advisory Panel** to ensure that student voice is embedded into the government's ongoing reform work to improve senior secondary education in Victoria.

**Developed a student-focused resource to support students who wish to make a complaint at school** to ensure that students have clear, accessible and relevant information and advice available to them when they have concerns about their experience at school and want to raise those concerns formally.

**Contributed to the development of new policies which promote inclusion for gender-diverse students in school sports** by providing student voice during the consultation process and providing valuable feedback to School Sports Victoria as they developed new advice for schools about how to ensure trans and gender-diverse students have every available opportunity to be involved in gendered sports at school.

Making submissions to government inquiries is also an important part of VicSRC's work. These submissions ensure that politicians who are focused on specific issues hear directly from students about what they have to say on any given topic. When developing a submission, VicSRC works directly with students to hear their voices about the topic at hand. This may include working with our Student Executive Advisory Committee, by hosting consultations with Victorian students, or by drawing from our previous work with students through events like Congress.

In 2023, VicSRC made three submissions to government inquiries:

### **Inquiry into the perceptions and status of Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

This inquiry, run by the Federal Senate, focused on finding new ways to improve the status of vocational education and training in Australia. In other words, this Inquiry was all about looking at ways to make vocational education more appealing, accessible, and celebrated within our communities.

This submission allowed VicSRC to shine a light on some of the key challenges which stand in the way of students reaching their full potential through vocational education



and training. Those challenges included the lack of accessible information about vocational pathways in schools, the stigma which still surrounds vocational education, and the need for vocational careers to be celebrated in schools in the same way that other pathways are celebrated.

In April 2023, VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee members Isabelle and Billy appeared at a hearing alongside VicSRC CEO Julia Baron, to speak more about VicSRC's submission and the key issues facing vocational education in Victoria.

This submission was followed by VicSRC working closely with the Victorian Department of Education to learn more about the attitudes and perception of VET among Victorian students through a joint research project in September 2023, and the establishment of the Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Student Advisory Panel to ensure that student voice remains an important component of the government's ongoing reform in this area.

### **Inquiry into assessment and support services for people with ADHD**

This Inquiry, also run by the Federal Senate, was dedicated to looking into how the government can best support people with ADHD in every aspect of their lives. VicSRC knew that it would be important to ensure that students were represented as part of this Inquiry, noting that students with ADHD often face unique challenges when trying to reach their full potential at school.

To develop this submission, VicSRC spoke with a group of 15 students from across Victoria who generously shared their insights and reflections about being a student with ADHD. Thanks to their engagement, VicSRC was able to identify key issues which exist for students with ADHD and make recommendations about how to address these problems.

Key issues identified included the fact that students with ADHD often struggle with typical forms of classroom instruction, and often feel that their teachers

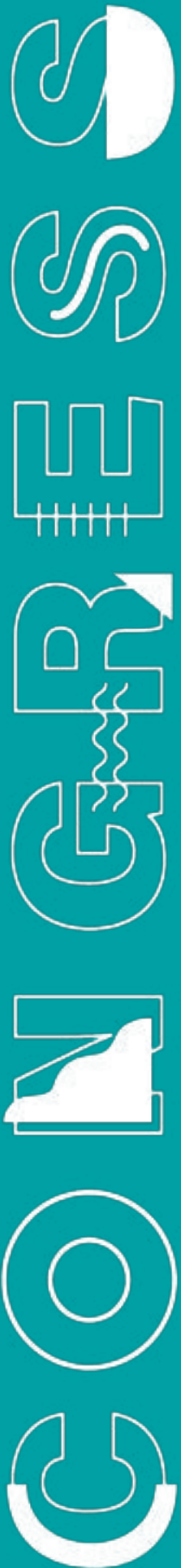


are not properly equipped to give them the support they need. The submission also covered the social and academic impacts of this problem, with students saying they often felt left behind when they saw their classmates doing much better than them with the same materials.

**Victorian Inquiry into the state education system**  
This Inquiry, run by the Victorian Legislative Council's Legal and Social Issues Committee, is focused on issues related to government schools in Victoria and the ways in which education can be improved to support positive outcomes and wellbeing for all Victorian students.

VicSRC decided to make this submission based on our 2023 Congress Report, which covered all of the most important issues according to students, including how to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students, how to improve inclusion and accessibility in Victorian classrooms, and how to re-think the way we define success at school to ensure that all students have opportunities to use their own strengths to thrive at school.





In 2023, VicSRC took a different approach to Congress by asking students to share their big ideas and challenges ahead of the day itself. This allowed VicSRC to learn more about what Victorian students cared most about before students gathered on the day, enabling us to take a more focused approach when having conversations with students about problems and new solutions for Victoria's education system.

Through this process, VicSRC learned that the four big issues which were on the minds of Victorian students more than any others were mental health and wellbeing, inclusivity and accessibility at school, what success looks and feels like at school, and ensuring that students, teachers, and schools receive the investments they need to thrive.

With these topics in mind, VicSRC's Student Executive Advisory Committee members led conversations with more than 113 students from across Victoria to delve deeper into each topic area, which allowed us to understand why these issues are so important for Victorian students, and what effective and student-led solutions may look like. All of this information was collated and developed alongside research from global education experts to make it clear where improvements to education were most urgently needed. The Congress Report made a number of key findings, and has guided the development of VicSRC's new Policy Platform. This report was widely distributed and received an exclusive launch with the Herald Sun, followed by publication in several leading news publications.

**VicSRC's flagship student-led experience bringing together students from across Victoria to unpack ideas and solve issues.**





# VicSRC CONGRESS 2023

GRAPHIC RECORDING by SARAH FIRTH  
SARAHTHEFIRTH.COM



## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

**STILL STRUGGLING POST-PANDEMIC**

**UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS and STANDARDS**

**EMOTIONAL and SOCIAL ISOLATION**

**THE DOMINO EFFECT:**

- STRESS
- TEACHER SHORTAGES
- LACK of SUPPORT

**STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS + SUPPORT**

**EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS**

**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING**

**MORE SUPPORTIVE and WELCOMING SCHOOLS**

**SUPPORT STRUGGLING STUDENTS**

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

**BULLYING**

**STIGMA and EXCLUSION**

**LACK of LEARNING LIFE SKILLS**

**ONE-SIZE fits ALL DOESN'T WORK**

**LACK of SOCIAL AID and SUPPORT**

**PUNISH DISCRIMINATION**

**SUPPORT CALD, LGBTIQ+ and DISABLED STUDENTS**

**ALTERNATIVES TO SEATS**

**SHORTER SESSIONS**

**INCLUSION TRAINING**

**flexible LEARNING OPTIONS**

**BILLS**

**VOTE TAX**

**TEACH LIFE SKILLS**

## DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

**ACADEMIC SUCCESS IS TOO NARROW**

**ATAR IS STRESSFUL**

**TOO EXAM FOCUSED**

**FEAR of FAILURE**

**RECOGNISE PERSONAL GROWTH**

**LEARN from FAILURE**

**LEARN STUDY SKILLS**

**SUCCESS SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- CREATIVITY
- PRACTICAL SKILLS
- PROBLEM-SOLVING

## GREATHER INVESTMENTS FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOLS & TEACHERS

**SPREAD TOO THIN LIKE VEGEMITE**

**HELP!!**

**TEACHER SHORTAGES**

**POOR AMENITIES**

**METRO vs REGIONAL INEQUITY**

**LACK of RESOURCES**

**DOLLOP THE FUNDS WHERE NEEDED LIKE JAM!**

**MORE FUNDING for EXCURSIONS**

**EQUITABLE ACCESS for STUDENTS**

**UPGRADE AMENITIES and INFRASTRUCTURE**

**PAY TEACHERS MORE and OVERTIME**





# AMBASSADORS

VicSRC Ambassadors is an annual program for Victorian students from years 6-10 interested in leading change in their schools. The program brings together students to build advocacy skills, take action on issues occurring in schools and amplify student voice. To ensure it remains accessible, VicSRC Ambassadors is funded by the Victorian Department of Education and is free for students.

Every year, the Ambassadors program is designed with Student Executive Advisory Committee members and evolves based on feedback and ideas from the previous year's participants. The program is designed to be adaptable to the issues and experiences of the current participants, so they can focus on developing a student voice initiative to be implemented at their school.

In 2023, 63 students from across the state applied to the Ambassadors program, with 40 selected.

Over the course of the program, each of the students were placed in groups to work on solving issues that they had identified within their schools. Teams would continue to communicate and work together on solutions between workshops and were taught invaluable skills in advocating to their school communities over the course of the program.

At the end of the Ambassadors program, students expressed feeling empowered to make change at their school and prepared with tools and strategies to do so due to their time in the Ambassadors program. VicSRC staff also recognised incredible growth amongst the students, particularly relating to confidence in advocacy, public speaking and leadership.

2024 will see a new iteration of the Ambassadors program based on the success of 2023, with a new multi-cohort approach and the introduction of four student internship opportunities throughout the year.

**We advocate for student-led positive changes in education.**



# We help adults to work better in partnership with students.

## Establishing a Community of Practice

Elevating the impact of student voice relies heavily on cultivating partnerships within the school community with dedicated advocates for student-led initiatives and decision-making. Our VicSRC Partner Schools membership has evolved over the years, yet one unwavering constant has been the dedication of these Partner Schools to authentically integrate and celebrate student voice within their communities.

In 2023, a comprehensive review of the Partner Schools membership was a top priority for VicSRC staff. Drawing upon valuable feedback and insights from current and prospective Partner Schools, we are thrilled to unveil a fresh offering aimed at empowering both existing and new VicSRC Partner Schools to foster students as genuine partners in their educational journey.

During the renewal of our membership offering, a notable aspect surfaced repeatedly in discussions with our Partner Schools – the desire for a network connecting student voice advocates to share experiences, tips and tools for best practice approaches, and overcome challenges together. That's why, alongside an array of exciting new benefits, Partner School members will now have the opportunity starting from 2024, to participate in a Community of Practice (CoP).

These Community of Practice meetings will take place quarterly, utilising a hybrid and online format to ensure accessibility for all potential members. It's not merely a platform for exchanging ideas and refining student voice practices among schools; it's a vital conduit for channelling valuable insights and information from our Partner Schools. This wealth of knowledge will be crafted into tailored resources for future Partner Schools and other student voice champions across Victoria.

We're excited to see how this dynamic network will continue to amplify student voices, foster collaboration, and pave the way for a

more empowered generation of students in Victoria.

## Banyule City Youth Forum

In October 2023, VicSRC staff members were involved in delivering a session to over 80 students from the City of Banyule as part of the Banyule City Council Youth Summit. Earlier in the year, students from the area had identified student voice and leadership as a topic that they would like to learn more about and upskill in, and Banyule Youth Services reached out to VicSRC to ask us for support in facilitating this learning.

The event brought together a number of schools in the local area, with teachers and students in attendance, some of who were in formal leadership positions and others who were simply interested in learning and upskilling. We delivered our Student Representative Team (SRT) Training Workshop to the group, which focuses on providing knowledge about student voice and representative leadership and asking students to work together to reflect on current practices at their schools and identify potential projects for students to engage with.

After the workshop we also had Billy, one of our Student Executive Advisory Committee members, join us to present to the Summit attendees as a keynote speaker. Billy shared his experience as a student advocate and working with VicSRC, encouraging the students in attendance to take action in their own communities. Having a student present at these events is something we feel is incredibly important, as they can provide insight into their lived experience and their understanding of issues affecting students is invaluable. Billy did an incredible job sharing his knowledge and empowering other students with his speech and Q&A session.

Overall, the day was a huge success and an event we were delighted to be involved with. Working with councils is a beneficial way for us to support students in schools that may not already know about VicSRC, and to encourage students to spread the word to their peers and teachers, and promote further workshops in their schools.

# PARTNERSHIPS



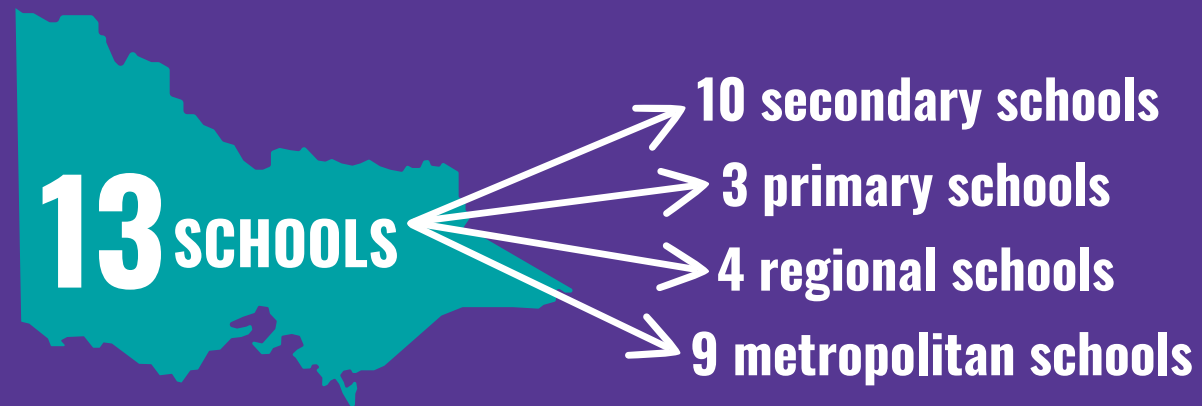
# TEACH THE TEACHER

## We help adults to work better in partnership with students.

Teach the Teacher is one of the key programs that VicSRC delivers to support the meaningful implementation of student voice in the school community.

Designed by students, the Teach the Teacher program is a whole school student-led framework to encourage and enable student voice, agency and participation delivered by VicSRC. An internationally recognised education program, Teach the Teacher aims to create an inclusive school culture where everyone's voices are equally heard. Teach the Teacher supports students to drive change at school by leading collaborative conversations with teachers, school leadership and staff.

This year, VicSRC's Teacher the Teacher program engaged with:



To improve access to this invaluable program, VicSRC offers both subsidised places and paid access to the program. This year, two schools in Victoria paid for the program while the remaining eleven were booked in subsidised places.

Over the last year, VicSRC has been gathering feedback through surveys and consultations to ensure that the program remains relevant, accessible and useful to the schools that engage with us. The team are always working to improve the Teach the Teacher model, and will soon be introducing an additional session to ensure educators and school staff are skilled and prepared to commit to the outcomes identified by students throughout the workshops, while also introducing further support from VicSRC once their program is completed.



## 2023 TEACH THE TEACHER SCHOOL

As one of the first steps in the program, students decide on a focus area that they think is most important to the students in their school. The students at this secondary school in regional Victoria wanted to focus on engagement in classes, and relationships between staff and students. Throughout the initial steps of the program, the students identified some barriers that stood in the way of feeling as though they could authentically engage with staff in conversation about these topics. Because of this challenge, a large element of VicSRC's work with the students was to provide them with skills to confidently initiate conversations with their teachers to make change.

In our workshops with the school, we made space for students to practice talking to staff about what matters to them, and the students learned about, and trialled, facilitation techniques for engaging in conversation with different people, and different objectives in mind. These workshops, along with a practice session, led to students feeling remarkably confident in presenting a professional development session to their teachers. The students worked incredibly well as a team and with their newly gained facilitation skills, they led the staff through a number of brainstorming exercises and conversations to understand what was causing the lack of engagement in classes and perceived disconnect between staff and students. Students and staff both highlighted their surprise at how smoothly the session was run and how aligned they were in their ideas about both the causes of the issues within the school and the potential solutions.

In our final workshop with the students, we guided them through the process of action planning and using the ideas from their professional development session to inform their work in the future. The students were able to come up with a realistic and measurable action plan that very clearly set out their next steps. Because they were able to engage in student-led, authentic conversations with staff at the school, students left the program feeling drastically more confident in participating in change-making at their school, working with staff, and engaging other students in their work.

The school has now enacted a number of changes outlined in the students' action plan, including having students involved in their teaching and learning meetings which allows them to have input into lessons. This is a great example of how VicSRC tailors Teach the Teacher to each school to ensure the group of students is supported in a meaningful way, utilising the program to step through a co-design process so students and teachers can learn new skills and build their confidence in working together in a more collaborative way.



# GASE STUDY



In 2023, VicSRC aligned our annual regional road trip with Victoria's Education Week in May, setting our sights on schools in the state's south-west. Over the course of a week, our Communications and Marketing Manager, Programs Officer and CEO visited regional schools to hear about their experiences in the education system.

Focusing on schools who have had limited touchpoints with VicSRC in the past, we ran specialised workshops to gather insights into all stages and experiences of student engagement across the year levels. All of the schools provided a glimpse into both the challenges and successes of meaningfully embedding student voice in regional education, highlighting the resilience and passion of students and educators alike.

Capturing the experiences of students who attend school in a rural or regional area is crucial for VicSRC. It ensures that the voices and needs of students in regional areas are not only heard but integrated into the broader conversation on student voice across the state. The Education Week road trip was an important experience for the team, connecting urban and regional perspectives and enriching VicSRC's understanding of student needs across Victoria.

An enormous thank you to the following schools for your enthusiastic participation and warm welcoming of our team:

- Bolwarra Primary School
- Warrnambool College
- Derinallum P-12 College
- Lavers Hill K-12 College
- Surf Coast Secondary
- Sacred Heart College Geelong

## We are inclusive of the needs of all students.



## We are inclusive of the needs of all students.

In May 2023, VicSRC spoke directly with 111 students from across Victoria to build a comprehensive understanding of the aspirations, goals, mindsets, and attitudes of VET students in Victoria.

This research, undertaken with the support of the Department of Education's Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Taskforce, aimed to build a strong profile of VET students from both Melbourne and across the state, giving students a stronger voice as part of the Victorian Government's ongoing reforms to senior secondary education. This research helped us learn from Victorian students in three key areas: how students understand the value and purpose of the VET Delivered to School Students (VDSS) program, what students see as their own post-school career aspirations, and how VDSS can help them get there (or not), as well as taking a closer look at the effectiveness and student satisfaction of the Work Experience and VET Taster schemes.

We worked with 13 schools across the state which offered a diverse range of VET pathways for students, with a mix of on-site and off-site delivery for those courses. This, combined with our effort to reach regional students and students across Years 9 – 12 meant that our research presented a strongly representative sample of secondary VET students across the state.

Some of the key findings from the report included:

A large majority of VET students agree that VET provides them with strong opportunities to succeed once they leave school.

Students have mixed experiences with work experience. Some students have a great time, while others really struggle to find placements, and don't always find the experience valuable.

Poor communication from schools and providers about VET opportunities are one of the key barriers which stop students from taking up VET.

Lots of VET students still plan on going to university, and most students recognise that doing VET at school doesn't 'box you in' to any particular career path. In fact, career flexibility once a student leaves school is one of the most valuable parts of VET according to students.

The report was provided to the Victorian Government in September 2023, and VicSRC continues to work very closely with the Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Taskforce to ensure that the voices of students are heard as they continue to improve senior secondary education for Victorian students.





## We are a sustainable organisation.

Central to the success of VicSRC is our Student Executive Advisory Committee. Made up of 15 secondary school students who provide direction and oversight for the organisation, the ability of the Executive Committee to effectively conduct their role is critical to ensuring VicSRC remains true to its vision, mission and core values.

Throughout 2023 it became clear that the role of the Executive Committee had morphed and grown over time, and was due for a review to ensure that students were being adequately supported to conduct their role. So, a decision was made by the Executive Committee and Board to run a series of consultations with everyone in the organisation to understand how processes, policies, and practice could be improved to better support the Executive Committee to effectively lead VicSRC.

After countless conversations with VicSRC staff and volunteers, a report was prepared which outlined the overarching feedback on how VicSRC could improve the support it provides to the Executive Committee. This included recommendations to co-design a clear purpose of the Executive Committee, providing clarity on their responsibilities and ensuring that is communicated clearly so that all students are well aware of the responsibilities associated with the role before nominating for a position. Other recommendations included improving the training and resources provided to ensure students can continue to build their skills and knowledge throughout their term on the Executive Committee, and expanding the breadth and number of opportunities available for students to engage with VicSRC, improving engagement with a wide and more diverse group of students from across Victoria, and allowing the Executive Committee the space to focus on aspects of their role that cannot be undertaken by other students.

The report itself included 33 recommendations, which have all been endorsed by the Executive Committee for implementation. The CEO and Executive Officer are working closely with the Executive Committee to implement each of the recommendations in a manner that supports their continued leadership of the organisation, whilst developing the skills of the staff and Board teams to ensure the working relationship between staff, the Executive Committee and the Board remains meaningful and productive.



VicSRC wouldn't be able to deliver on all our great work without the commitment and enthusiasm of all of our staff. A heartfelt thanks goes out to the entire team for all the work they have put in over the last 18 months.

Abby Wiverton  
Benita Bruce  
Chelsea Daniel  
David Trevorrow  
Emily Gundry  
Georgia Cutajar

Hayley Allan  
Ian Johnson  
Jake Fehily  
Julia Baron  
Kane Ord  
Keisha Healy

Nell McColl  
Nina Laitala  
Riya Rajesh  
William Naughton-Gravette  
Winnie Tsang





# TREASURER'S REPORT

For the year ending 31 December 2023, VicSRC has reported a small deficit of \$876. This is a strong result as VicSRC continued to adjust its programs and operations post-COVID, as well as making investments in increased staff capacity.

It should be noted that VicSRC's 2023 Financial Reports compare its 2023 performance to only six months of 2022, given VicSRC's shift to reporting on a calendar rather than financial year. There was an increase in VicSRC's funding year on year, reflecting additional grants for fee-for-service work. VicSRC's core funding remained steady and strong. There was an increase in some expenses to reflect this increased revenue. Otherwise, expenditure remained both reasonable and steady.

Through conscientious financial and risk management, VicSRC has not needed to use any retained surplus in this financial year.

VicSRC has a retained surplus of \$297,133 at the end of this financial year, maintaining its strong position to continue to invest in growth areas without undertaking unnecessary financial risk.



**Tim Warwick**  
(he/him)

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT



## Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 \$	6-month ended 31 Dec 2022 \$
Revenue	708,285	326,034
Interest income	4,707	1,173
<b>Total income</b>	<b>712,992</b>	<b>327,207</b>
Employee benefit expenses	(591,013)	(273,952)
Accommodation expenses	(45,368)	(22,580)
Administrative expenses	(24,251)	(8,833)
Communication expenses	(5,575)	(6,241)
Depreciation	(4,197)	(1,319)
Project costs	(42,114)	(19,181)
Other expenses	(1,350)	(651)
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>(713,868)</b>	<b>(332,757)</b>
<b>Surplus/ (deficit) for the year</b>	<b>(876)</b>	<b>(5,550)</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the year</b>	<b>(876)</b>	<b>(5,550)</b>



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT



Statement of financial position  
for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	151,223	144,127
Trade and other receivables	182,150	182,478
Other assets	8,887	6,656
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>342,260</b>	<b>333,261</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Investments in term deposits	39,203	38,075
Property, plant and equipment	8,790	6,601
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>47,993</b>	<b>44,676</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>390,253</b>	<b>377,937</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	56,960	37,885
Employee benefits	34,072	16,523
Income received in advance	-	9,825
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>91,032</b>	<b>64,233</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Employee benefits	2,088	15,695
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>93,120</b>	<b>79,928</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>297,133</b>	<b>298,009</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Retained surplus	297,133	298,009

## Become a Partner School



VicSRC Partner Schools are part of a network of schools across Victoria that are working hard to empower students as partners in learning through voice, agency and leadership.

We are calling on schools around Victoria to join the growing movement - are you next?

## Join the Student Community



A state-wide organisation like VicSRC needs your active involvement.

No matter your age, we are stronger when we work together.

Are you a primary or secondary student studying in Victoria? If you answered yes, then you're eligible to join the VicSRC Student Community!

## Sign up for our mailing list



Not a student or an educator but still want updates on our work? Join our mailing list!

Whether its updates on our advocacy, new programs or exciting news in education reform, you can be sure to never miss a beat when it comes to student voice.

# JOIN THE ROAR OF STUDENT VOICE





Victorian Student Representative  
Council Pty Ltd

**Wurundjeri Country**  
552 Victoria Street  
North Melbourne, Victoria 3051

[www.vicsrc.org.au](http://www.vicsrc.org.au)  
[info@vicsrc.org.au](mailto:info@vicsrc.org.au)

**May 2024**