

VicSRC's work takes place across Victoria and Australia and we respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we live, learn and work on.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and commit to listen to the voices of all. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and this is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.



What is Congress?

Congress is a student-led and student-focussed conference. It brings together secondary students from year seven to year twelve from all types of schools and all around Victoria.

It's three days during the June-July school holidays where nearly 200 students come together to talk about the issues that affect all levels of the education system and come up with new, exciting, innovative ways to tackle them...together! These issues then become central to VicS-RC's advocacy work over the next year as we take them straight to the Minister for Education, to advise him and work with the Department of Education and Training on implementation.

But first...

VicSRC

Since Congress 2018... What has VicSRC done?

an enormous year.

We've moved office three times before settling into our forever home in North Melbourne on the eve of Congress 2019. We're taking our first steps to becoming an independent organisation after more than a decade of wonderful care and guidance from the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. We've grown again with two new staff roles and a whole to get involved.

We've run programs, attended meetings, sat on reference groups and presented on panels. (For just how many check the page opposite!) We've grown the Student Voice Hub to over four hundred members and used it to get student feedback that goes directly back into our work.

For VicSRC 2018-2019 has been We've relished the swell of student voice that started in 2018 and has only grown in the twelve months since.

> We're excited for what the future will bring but for now we're taking a moment to reflect on what we've achieved - we think you'll be impressed, we certainly are.

> > The VicSRC Team



VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Skills First Regional Forum Victorian Council of Social Services Education Equity Coalition Video Conference Call with Brisbane Catholic Education Connect the Dots Rural Youth Sector Conference Austalian Council for Educational Leaders VicSRC Ambassadors meeting Respectful Relationships workshop City of Melbourne Training in Event Planning and Promotion School Strike 4 Climate Action Training Day School Leaders For Gender Equality and Respect Parents Victoria Annual Conference Dinner The Art of Positive Change VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Ngaga-Diji (hear me) Launch School Council Forum Respectful Relationships Panel Education State Guiding Coalition Plenary Meeting with Mary Jean Gallagher Working Group for the International Directions and Networking in Student Voice, Agency, Leadership and Participation VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Judging Panel for the Student Voice Awards Marrung Ministerial Roundtable Victorian Anti Bullying and Mental Health Initiative VicSRC Ambassadors meeting Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Rural Youth Awards DET Regional Services Group about Students on School Council Your Voice Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective Conference Skills First Regional Forum Congress Volunteer and VicSRC Executive Committee Meet and Greet VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Assistant Principals Meeting for Student Voice Respectful Relationships Advisory Group Skype Meeting with the School Student Union of Norway Complaints Management Reference Group Three Day Executive Camp Victorian Commercial Teachers Association Student Voice Professional Learning Program School Council Forum Panel for National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne Design Week Archipitch School Governance Network School Council Forums VicSRC Ambassadors meeting Victorian Council of Social Services Education Equity Coalition Skills First Regional Forum Embedding Student Voice in Respectful Relationships by Domestic Violence Resource Centre VicSRC Executive Committee meeting DET Regional Services Group about Students on School Council Skills First Regional Forum Q&A Interview with Mary Jean Gallagher VicSRC Ambassadors meeting Student Voice Resrouce Development Workshop School Strike 4 Climate National Young Leaders Day by Halogen Meeting with the Minister for Education Honourable James Merlino MP VicSRC Executive Committee meeting University of Melbourne Graduate Education Society End of Year Conference Respectful Relationships Advisory Group Department of Education and Training meetings on School SurveysVictorian Certificate of Education Leadership Awards Ceremony Three Day Executive Camp Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Annual General Meeting 2019 Melbourne Declaration Ministerial Forum School Leaders For Gender Equality and Respect Forest Hill College Student Leadership Conference Forum VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Power to YOUth Forum Marrung Central Governance Committee Department of Education and Training Students on School CouncilVicSRC Ambassadors meeting Skills First Regional Forum Victorian Council of Social Services Education Equity Coalition Meeting with the Minister for Education, Honourable James Merlino MP Opportunities and Access for Regional and Remote Communities working group School Council Forum VicSRC Executive Committee meeting VicSRC Executive Committee Facilitation Training Skills First Regional Forum 2019 Department of Education-Victorian Community Sector Education Forum VicSRC Ambassadors meeting Knox City Council Short Film "Masked" School Strike 4 Climate Action Training Day Centre for Multicultural Youth My Education Awards VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Recognise and Celebrate the Benefit of Education Marrung Central Governance Committee Meeting with Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority CEO David Howes Treasurer's Victorian Council of Social Services Budget Breakfast VicSRC Ambassadors meeting DET Regional Services Group about Students on School Council Victorian Institute of Teaching Professional Boundaries Workshop Skills First Regional Forum National Youth Commission Public Hearing Meeting with Secretary of the Department of Education and Training Jenny Atta VicSRC Executive Committee meeting VicSRC Student Voice Awards School Strike 4 Climate Respectful Relationships Advisory Group Department of Education and Training Statewide Leadership Conference VicSRC Executive Committee meeting Congress Volunteer and VicSRC Executive Committee Training Day Marrung Central Governance Committee Progress Conference 2019 Panel Discussion VicSRC Ambassadors meeting Vic-Budget Education Department of Education and Training Funded Projects Advisory Meeting with Petrina



Where has VicSRC been? Engagements Students Partner Schools

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What has VicSRC achieved? Our Congress 2018 Priorities.

Transparency in the school system

- Students from the VicSRC Executive Committee met regularly with the School Operations and Statewide Services Division to increase support for school councillors who represent their student body and understand what information should be fed back to students.
- These students also met with the Department of Education and Training around reviewing and improving school council training modules delivered both face-to-face and online using student consultation.
- VicSRC created resources currently available on our website and on the Student Voice Hub to help student councillors understand their role and work more effectively as the student voices on school councils.

Opportunities & access for rural & remote communities

- Government policy has implemented many of the student-designed solutions from Congress 2018, including;
 - supporting schools in regional areas to create partnerships that open up more opportunities for students
 - expanding the Virtual School Victoria and the Victorian School of Languages to ensure all students can access all VCE subjects in the future.
- The Department of Education and Training held a consultation with a group of students from the VicSRC Executive Committee from rural and regional areas on how best to support students with these initiatives.
- Awareness raising efforts included a rural student from the VicSRC Executive Committee featuring in an article in The Age that addresses the challenges and opportunities facing students in rural and regional areas.



What has VicSRC achieved? Our Congress 2018 Priorities.

Gender equality in schools Discrimination in school Changing language, changing attitudes



- Students from the VicSRC Executive Committee met with the Department of Education and Training's Performance and Evaluation Division to talk about including new questions in the Attitudes to School survey that are focussed on students.
- VicSRC students are now working on the suggested questions that might be included in the Attitudes to School survey in 2020 that will better inform schools and equip them to address any issues with discriminatory language in the school environment.
- VicSRC gathered student perspectives and opinions to put together a submission to the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health.
- VicSRC co-designed and co-facilitated a workshop for students and teachers around gender equality in schools and how students can take the lead in creating more equity in education.

Transforming VCE

- Students from the VicSRC Executive Committee met with the CEO of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to discuss the possibility of a student representative sitting on the VCAA board.
- Due to ethics concerns around a current student sitting on a board that oversees curriculum decisions it was decided that VicSRC would recommend recently graduated students who would be suitable and encourage them to apply for the next available board position.
- VicSRC supported five young people to apply and are looking forward to receiving confirmation about the appointment in the near future.
- An article appeared in The Age highlighting the importance of student voice in designing and setting the curriculum, particularly VCE.



wStudents from all across the state A WORD FROM THE CONGRESS COORDINATOR.

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I cannot even begin to comprehend how much Congress has shaped me and many other delegates into stronger and more confident leaders of change. From a delegate to an executive managing the event, each day of Congress brought new lessons and new challenges.

Beth Congress Coordinator

My experience as a delegate was unforgettable. I remember from the moment I was greeted out the front of Ormond by the executives, I knew that I was welcomed and how valuable the experience would be. And that impression went beyond my expectations. Some people laugh at the idea of me being shy, but prior to Congress I had the passion but not the confidence to speak up on issues I cared about. That drastically changed as I gained confidence as an individual, a student and a leader. It changed me for the better and that spirit still carries me through till this day.

I was fortunate enough to be elected to the VicSRC Executive Committee and serve as Congress Coordinator. A role I relished because that meant I too could create that Congress experience for many more students.

From the moment we started planning Congress it always felt too far away for it to be real. Even on the eve of Congress it felt so surreal that soon dozens of passionate students would experience the same growth and empowerment that I felt as a delegate. And witnessing such immediate changes in delegates still leaves me breathless. It is for that reason that - despite all the hurdles of last minute changes, the sleepless nights and hard work - reflecting on what Congress has done for so many makes it all worthwhile.

The theme 'we don't make change alone' felt incredibly real when seeing how delegates lived up to it. The teamwork displayed by such diverse groups of students, all fighting against the same issues, sparking action both at Congress and in their own schools, was incredible. The theme became more than a tagline, it became the culture of Congress.

This year we saw more than ever before a bunch of overlapping ideas. So many students were focused and concerned about the same issues, that it became necessary to have multiple action teams working on different facets of the issues. But even early on it was evident how concentrated students concerns were over issues like the climate and political education. As huge as these issues are it's uplifting to be reminded that we aren't alone in the battles, these issues are on everyone's minds.

That is why Congress is so important because it creates that forum and space for students to vocalise their concerns and have control over their future by empowering student voice.

It is such a valuable experience for everyone. And I'm super excited to come back next year to volunteer, to further the growth and continue to contribute to such an astonishing event.

> "Congress has never failed to leave me enthused about the power of student voice."

What do people say about Congress?









Climate Crisis!

Vision.

We believe all students should be educated on the climate crisis so they can take action themselves as well as advocate for others (schools, parents and guardians, etc) to take action to fight climate change.

What's the problem?

Students are the people who will feel the impact of climate change the most - younger people will live with the effects of the climate crisis longer and struggle more as things get worse. Due to a gap in their education not all students are fully aware of the problem or what they can do to combat it.

Solutions.

Solution One Practical goal setting related to climate change.

Solution Two Student action within organisations already fighting climate change.

Solution Three Promoting and educating people to take practical solutions



Politics 101

Vision.

We believe that all young people should be equipped with knowledge about our political system in order to make more informed decisions about their future, and that all schools should provide a consistent teaching of civics and citizenship education.

What's the problem?

We as students are uninformed about our political system. A students we often don't know how to enrol & how to vote, how policy works and what parties stand for.

This is because civics & citizenship education in Victorian high schools is not meeting the needs of young people.

We believe civics & citizenship is not consistently taught to young people.

Why is this important?

Politics 101 should be a priority because when young people don't know enough about the political system and how policy works they make uninformed decisions when the time comes to vote.

Young people are the next generation of voters and must be informed about who they can support in order to fit in with their personal beliefs and priorities.





Solutions.

Solution One

Consistent teaching of civics & citizenship should be taught, supported by professional development sessions for teachers that emphasise the importance of civis & citizenship.

Solution Two

VicSRC, with the support of key stakeholders such as the Victorian Electorial Commission and Parliamentary Conventions, collate a resource pack for teachers with existing education tools.

Solution Three

Student-led workshops that cover the policy of political parties.

Mental Health in Schools

Vision.

aid training.

We believe that all students should have access to mental health support, be empowered and trained to support each other and that all teachers should have mental healrth first

What's the problem?

Mental health concerns are on the rise, particularly among young people. These issues are difficult for people to talk about due to stigma, which can cause a feeling of isolation. School settings can increase this and make it riskier that students will not seek help.

Why is this important?

The prevalence of mental health issues has increased and around 20% of students now have a diagnosable mental health problem, which will almost always be detrimental to their education and general wellbeing.

Currently general school staff including most year level leaders, who deal with these issues on a daily basis, have no mental health training. This means that school, where students spend a huge amount of time, is not always a safe or consistent space to deal with these issues.

Solutions.

Solution One

Secondary schools should have a group of students who can action initiatives that will improve the mental health of students.

Solution Two

Secondary students should be trained and partnered with professionals to go into primary schools to ficilitate conversations about mental health.

Solution Three

Mental health first aid training should be part of all teacher's professional development requirements.





Real World Skills Vision.

We believe all students should leave school with an education that gives them the necessary skills to participate in and understand key aspects of life.

What's the problem?

Even though real life skills are included in the current Victorian curriculum they are not taught effectively to students.

This leaves students with a lack of understanding of work life, household management, civics and citizenship and everyday life.

Why is this important?

One of the primary purposes of school is to prepare students for real life. But students finishing school today struggle to manage different aspects of their post-graduation lives. They lack understanding of the basic skills that enable others to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.



Solutions.

Solution One

Identify effective methods for real life skills to be implemented into schools.

Solution Two

Partnering with external organisations who already provide resources and education on real-life skills.

Solution Three

Linking schools to these organisations and resources.

Sustainability Education

Vision.

We believe that sustainability should be taught across all curriculum areas and more fully imbedded in all aspects of schools.



What's the problem?

There's a lack of education on sustainability in schools, which has left students unaware of the impact they have on the world. Schools are also inconsistent in their sustainability practices and the implementation of sustainability programs.

Why is this important?

Sustainability is an important issue to school students as we've seen through the ongoing work of School Strike 4 Climate and the participation of hundreds of thousands of students around the country.

We are at a crisis point on this issue and have to act now.



Solutions.

Solution One

Improve the implementation of sustainability as a cross-curriculum priority. Establish regular reporting by teachers on the implementation of sustainability education in their classes.

Solution Two

Mandate specific time and funding for sustainability education. Allocate a sustainability teacher to most high schools.

Solution Three

Allocate physical resources such as garden beds, three bin systems and grey water systems that provide practical sustainability education in schools.

Student Activism, Leadership, Advocacy and Dialogue _{Vision.}

We believe students should have the opportunity to analyse and understand the current political climate at school as well as be empowered to be active in politics even before they can vote.



What's the problem?

Students are not informed about politics and age into voting with very little information about the government or the parties they are voting for. The education system is failing to educate students about the political environment and leaving them with this struggle.

Why is this important?

Nine out of ten students don't feel that they understand politics. The politicians that these students will be - or in some cases already are - voting for will be making decisions that affect the next sixty years of student's lives.

It is imperative that we engage students in politics to ensure they are adequately informed when making decisions that will affect their future.





Solutions.



Solution One

Advocate for the creation of empowering workshops for young people that spark activism and leadership within students.

Solution Two

Advocate for local MPs to attend high schools in their electorates annually for an open seminar in which poiticans and students get to engage in dialogue.

Primary & Secondary Transition Assistance

Vision.

We believe all students should have a cohesive and helpful transition period that leaves them ready to begin high school.

What's the problem?

There is a lack of consistency between schools in the support provided during the transition between year levels. The lack of targeted support for students going through transition, especially for students struggling with the workload, struggling academically or with other high school experiences can be alienating and harmful.

Why is this important?

This issue directly affects all students who have to make the transition from primary school to high school. A lack of support during the transition period can be severely detrimental to those affected all through their high school life, causing students to become disengaged with both their students and their peers.



Solutions.

Solution One

A peer support program that groups older students with Year 7 students at the start of the year to provide them with support during the transition process.

Solution Two

Schools should be encouraged to work with programs like Jump Start - which begins working with students at the end of Year 6 and helps to provide a better, more comprehensive orientation that helps them adjust to high school life.

Solution Three

The Respectful Relationships program could also be reworked to better suit primary school students and students at the beginning of Year 7 who require more support and can benefit from the program's aims.

Inclusive Sex Ed

Vision.

We believe all students should be provided with sex education that is inclusive and covers the diverse identities of students as well as the spectrum of relationships available.

What's the problem?

Everyone's bodies and desires are different but everyone should learn about the spectrum of sexuality and gender. Sex education currently caters to mainstream and parental comfort rather than focusing on informing students. The current curriculum also doesn't cover the emotional aspect of sexuality including stigma around things like slut shaming and abortion misconceptions or sex beyond reproduction.

Solutions.

Solution One

Advocate to the Department of Education and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to have a more flexible implementation sex education program from a young age.

Solution Two

Go to Parents Victoria and work with them to make the benefits of a more inclusive sex education curriculum clear to parents around the state. Emphasise not all kids have parents who can provide more information and not all parents are comfortable talking about sex ed with their kids.

Solution Three

Talk to the Principals Association and emphasise the importance of having inclusive sex ed that is not just about anatomical reporduction. Create a plan to work towards more comfortable school environments when students and teachers are talking about these things.



Indigenous Awareness

Vision.

We believe that our education system should tell the true story of our First Nations people in the hope that this will translate into better inclusion and less discrimination.

What's the problem?

There's a lack of education in schools about Australian history that leads to ignorance of and discrimination against Indigenous Australians. This is also contributing to an ongoing suppression and loss of Indigenous culture, art, music, tradition and language.

Solutions.

Solution One

Working with Indigenous groups to lobby for changes to the curriculum to incorporate more Australian history.

Solution Two

Promoting resources and different approaches to teaching of Australian history that are designed and advocated for by Indigenous groups.

Solution Three

Working to encourage partnerships and collaborations between schools and Indigenous organisations local to their area to learn regional history and practices.







FUNDamental Equity

Vision.

We believe all schools should be adequately funded and all students should receive the same access and opportunities in their education.

What's the problem?

Students get different opportunities in their education depending on how well the school they go to is funded.

Schools are also making ill-informed financial decisions resulting in funding being misused.

Why is this important?

The urgency of this issue is centred around the disparity in opportunities between students. This means a myriad of students every year are facing limitations on their pathways and are being prevented from achieving their full potential. Everyone deserves fair and consistent opportunities and rectifying the current imbalance is an issue of the utmost importance. No student should be left behind.





Solutions.

Solution One

By expanding the current state-wide census to obtain data regarding school facilities, curriculum and mental health support for the Department of Education and Training to take to appropriate departments in order to bridge the gaps identified in the results.

Solution Two

Acknowledge the disadvantages in schools by including more determining factors in the application process such as school curriculum, facilities and mental health support. This will ensure that problems are appropriately targeted.

Solution Three

Advocate to the government to adopt transparency and communicate in their funding plans so that schools are better informed to make financial decisions.

Building Companionships to Conquer Anxiety

Vision.

We believe that schools should provide an environment and system that addresses both causes and impacts of anxiety and other mental health problems that affect students. We want to see a world where students are better equipped to deal with anxiety.

What's the problem?

The current educational environment causes a lot of stress and anxiety for students which can limit a student's ability to engage in the classroom and can lead to students dropping out of high school and facing further issues as a result.



Why is it important?

We know that mental health is a pressing issue in society today, particularly in school students. Anxiety takes students out of the classroom, causes them to lose motivation or become restless in class - affecting not only their own education but that of their peers. More broadly a majority of those suffering anxiety are students, who struggle to reach out. We need to tackle these problems as they incur in schools and so by providing solutions at the root we can increase overall wellbeing.

Solutions.

Solution One

There should be a range of strategies to help students deal with their anxiety.

Solution Two

There should be more support and involvement of students in school wellbeing teams to ensure that the teams are actually meeting the needs of students on the ground.

Solution Three

There should be a stronger focus on identifying and promoting a range of strategies to prevent anxiety.



Your 2018-2019 VicSRC Executive Committee





Like the three As in my name, working with VicSRC has recharged me like a triple A battery!



Learn from yesterday. Live for today. Hope for tomorrow.



We're running behind schedule.

If you learn from your defeat you haven't really lost.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

Every day may not be a good day good there is good in every day.







FIf opportunity doesn't knock, build a door



∐t's okay, my bag is full of chickpeas.



Regret is the demise of those who live with indecision.



No pictures please



If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way



Se the change you want to see in the world



And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people S permission to do the same



Congress 2019 proudly sponsored by



VicSRC

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Victorian Student Representative Council 2018 - 19

Michelle

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Julia