

#Congress2018

With more students, more staff, more stakeholders, more technology and more sustainability Congress just keeps on growing!

Bursting at the seams with ideas, innovations and enthusiasm Congress 2018 was our biggest yet! Bringing together almost two hundred students from around the state to spark conversations and collaborations on the toughest issues in education today.

Congress 2018 was attended by:

- one hundred and ninety seven delegates representing 85 schools,
- the Minister for Education and Acting Premier the Honourable James Merlino,
 and
- more than 75 stakeholders from across the community and education sectors.

and featured:

- innovative solutions to the top twelve issues in education,
- election of the 2018-2019 Student Executive, and
- the launch of the Student Voice Hub.

This report provides an overview of Congress 2018 and student-led solutions to twelve major issues in Victorian education. We urge all students, teachers, principals and education leaders to continue to engage with these issues and meaningfully consider how they can make change in their schools and communities.

This was Congress in the year of student voice.



Note from Angelique

My first ever Congress was in 2017, and I was amazed at how eager students from across Victoria to make change in their education system. Congress is an annual event where students from years 7-12 from all across Victoria. Congress is where students unite as one to make an influential impact not just within schools but on a state level!

Students gather from Bendigo to Sunshine to Myrtleford to Mildura to Casterton to Gippsland and it is by far an unmissable event, and an amazing atmosphere to be surrounded in. Congress is where staff, volunteers and the 15 Executive members help organize a three-day event accompanied by 200+ students from over 60+ schools where students present their 12 action team proposals in front of key stakeholders and the honorable Minister Merlino.

At Congress, it doesn't matter if you are from Private Schools, Public Schools, TAFE, Catholic Schools, Government Schools or anything else, all student voice's matter and by working together we can all make change that will impact Victoria for good!

My first year at Congress I was elected onto the Executive Team and within a year, I have gained a lot of skills abilities and have made amazing friendships and have had the privilege to be apart of the Exec team and help make change with the rest of the students of Victoria.

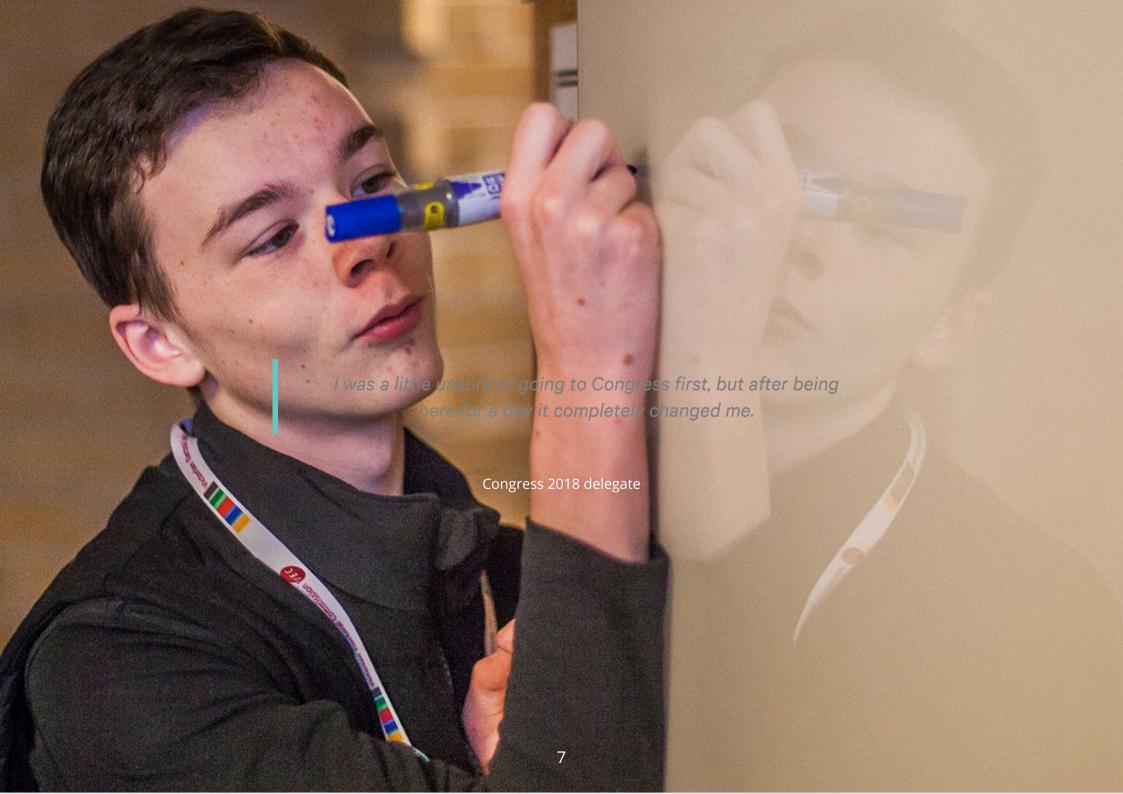
This year, by keeping the similar style of an un-conference like feel, it helped students pick issues and topics that are generally important to them. I would like to give a big thanks to the Volunteers, Staff, the amazing Executive team and the Ormond College staff for making Congress 2018 happen and making it such a huge success!!

Throughout Congress, you could see the passion and the level of professionalism from every delegate, and its an amazing feeling to see students joyous about making changes in our education system that are important to them!

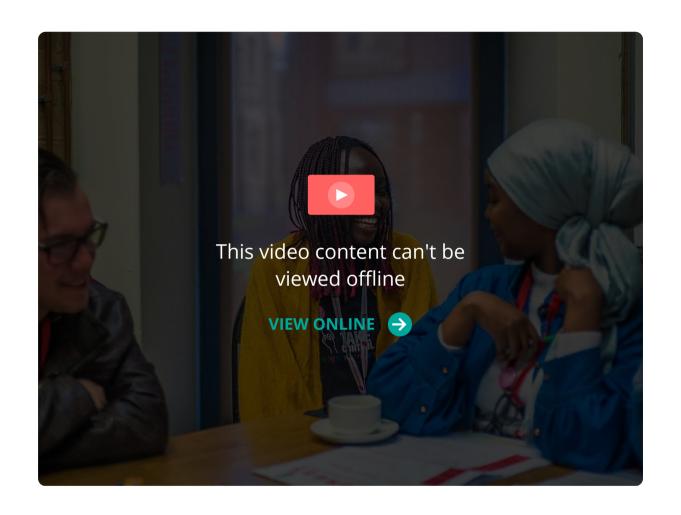
As my last year as a delegate, it was very clear that students who attended Congress came willing and eager to speak and act upon concerning issues in education today. When delegates raise important issues, they will find solutions by working together to make a success for all schools! It has been an absolute pleasure, to help serve as great cause, because students voice's matter!!

Angelique Corke-Cox, 17, Sunshine Secondary College

VicSRC Congress Coordinator 2018









About us

The Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) is the peak body representing students in Victoria. Our vision is a student-focused education system that enhances young people's capacity to change the world. We exist to empower all student voices to be valued in every aspect of education.

About Congress

Run by students, for students and attended by the Minister for Education, the VicSRC Congress brings students together from all across the state to debate, decide and act on the issues that really matter to their education.

Through interactive workshops and solutions-focused debate, student delegates determine the VicSRC policy agenda for the coming year, and appoint the Student Executive team that will implement it.

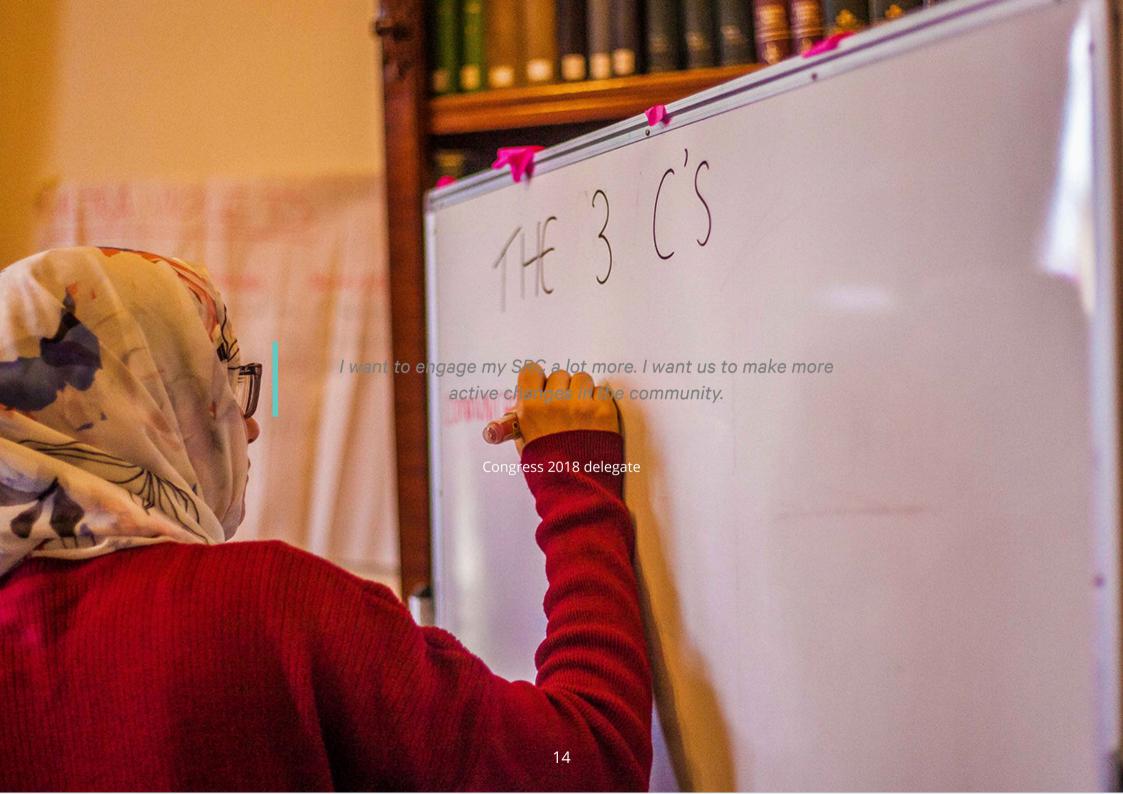
In 2018, we kept things loose. Maintaining our 2017, choose-your-own-adventure format delegates were empowered to shape Congress in real time. We built capacity and let student's passions and interests lead the way.

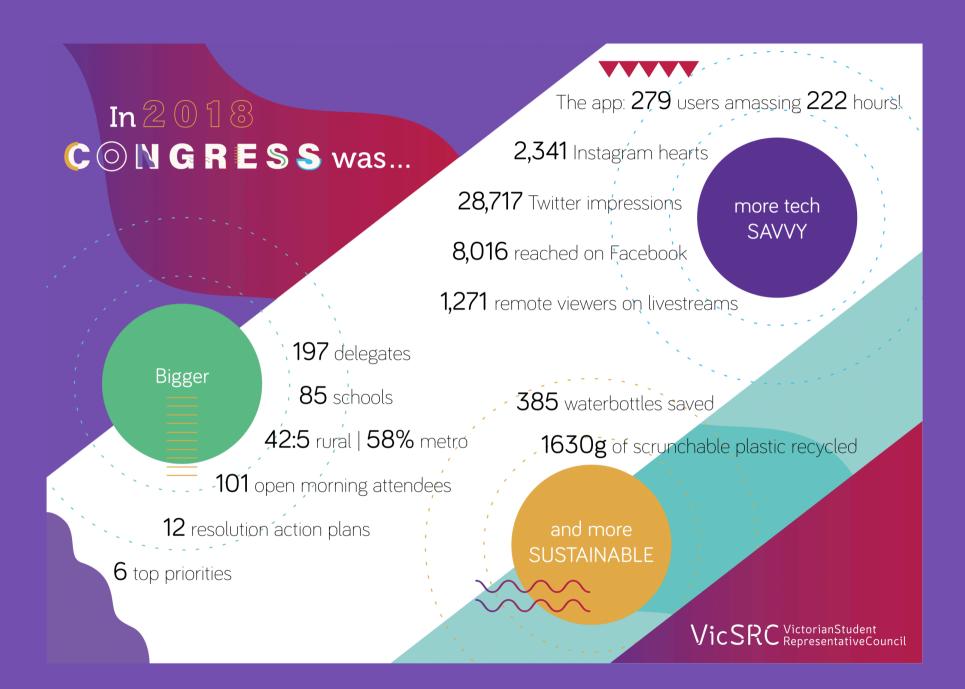
This was Congress in the year of student voice.



"Student voice isn't only about students voicing their opinions and advocating for change. Its profound impact is break social barriers and letting everyone see that we are capable to be overseers of our own education."

VicSRC Executive Student 2018-2019







Transparency in the School System

Opportunities and Access for Rural and Remote Communities

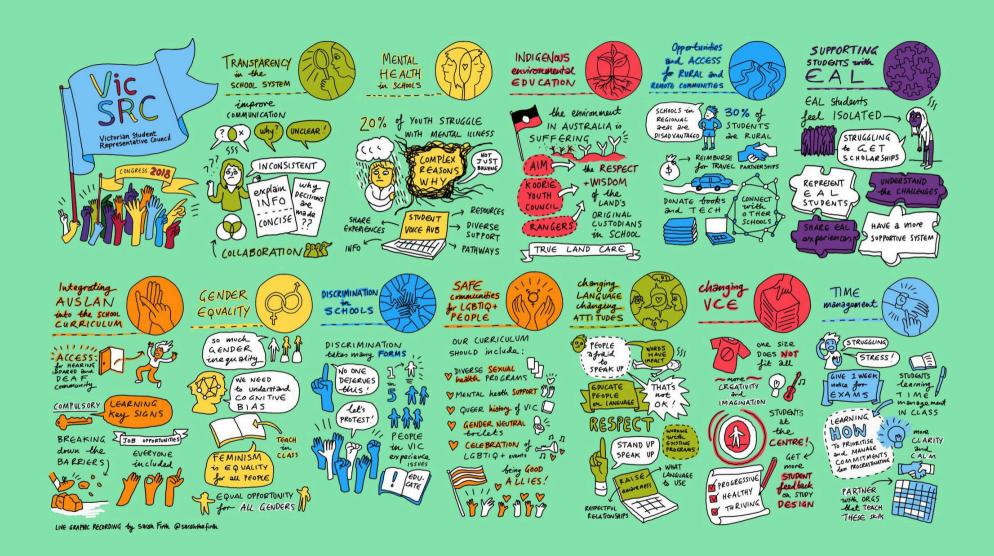
Gender Equality in Schools

#weR1: Discrimination in Schools

Transforming VCE

Changing Language, Changing Attitudes







There is a fundamental lack of communication, comprehension and collaboration between the different levels of the education system. This makes it difficult for students to know how to get involved in decision making both at their school and at higher levels.

- Decisions made at the school level by School Councils could be fed back to the SRC and communicated to the wider student body.
- The Department of Education could maintain a page on their website explaining in student-friendly language how students can be involved in decision making at both school and state levels.
- Local MPs could meet with SRC teams in their local area to talk about education and school issues once a year.



Discrimination affects everyone and happens even in places where people should feel safe, like schools. Discrimination has a wider impact on school and community culture, and impacts a variety of other issues - particularly student mental health and inclusion.

- · A program could be developed to educate perpetrators and support students and groups that are targeted.
- Teachers, students and other young people as a whole could be educated about the cause and effects of discrimination.
- A widespread communications campaign could be developed including posters, videos and ways for people to express their
 experiences of discrimination in a safe space.



The current VCE curriculum does not prepare students for the real world. It also leaves no room for mistakes and causes a huge amount of stress and anxiety. It is a one size fits all approach to education designed to create an impossible 'perfect' student.

- VCE exam related questions could be added to the 'Attitudes to School' annual survey to capture student feeling and ideas
 around this issue.
- A policy could be enacted to ensure chief assessors consult with VCE students post-examination.
- A diverse group of students could be represented on the VCE board to ensure there are multiple perspectives involved in curriculum creation.



Students with English as another language may experience isolation and alienation from the Australian student experience as student opportunities are not always inclusive and these students are not always consulted to ensure they will be supported to participate along with the larger student body.

- Guidelines could be issued to ensure that EAL students are included in student consultations and not excluded by language barriers.
- EAL support in schools could be reformed to function more as a general assistance program across all areas, adapting to student's needs rather than generalising for all EAL students.
- Student opportunities could be audited to ensure they are accessible to EAL students



People often ignorantly use words that describe minority groups or identities negatively or as insults. This happens because the people using them aren't aware of the detrimental effect it has on the minority groups they are targeting due to a lack of exposure or education.

- Questions could be included in the annual Attitudes to School survey to gather information about common contexts in which discriminatory language is used.
- A review of the current curriculum could be conducted to improve initiatives around discrimination, specifically around the use of language.
- Partnerships could be established with organisations already working against discrimination to campaign specifically against discriminatory language.



School communities, parents and guardians often lack the skills necessary to provide preventative or consistent support for student's mental health. There is a general confusion and lack of knowledge as well as a lack of accessibility or even awareness around what resources are available.

- VicSRC could co-facilitate parent forums and information sessions around mental health with individual schools.
- · VicSRC could advocate for more mental health information and support for parents, carers and guardians.
- VicSRC could collaborate with students, diverse stakeholders and the Department of Education to pitch a more proactive and preventative approach to mental health in schools.



Hearing teachers and students are often unable to communicate with hearing impaired or Deaf students, which creates a divide in education between the hearing community and the Deaf community. This also excludes Deaf and hearing impaired students from many student opportunities.

- Policy could be changed to include AUSLAN lessons in both primary and secondary curricula.
- There could be sector investment and development in institutions that can offer AUSLAN extension as a co-curricula activity.
- Further opportunities could be created for these students to work on their AUSLAN in environments with Deaf and hearing impaired students.



Students living in rural and regional Victoria are at a disadvantage - not only are they often lacking resources like technology, as wel as the teachers and means to offer extracurricular classes students are often unaware of opportunities on offer.

- VicSRC could facilitate partnerships between rural and metro schools to ensure opportunities are communicated and that rural
 and regional students have support when coming into metro areas.
- VicSRC could seek partnerships with Rural Youth Ambassadors, YACVic Rural and other rural youth bodies to further support their efforts to address access disparity.
- VicSRC could lobby for more state government funding specifically to cover travel and accommodation costs for rural and regional students accessing opportunities outside their local area.



Schools currently lack facilities and events that exclusively cater to LGBTQI+ students. There is limited opportunity to learn about queer cultural history and receive diverse sexual health education or access mental health professionals who provide an explicitly safe space for LGBTQI+ students.

- VicSRC could provide assistance for students campaigning for their schools to offer all gender or gender neutral toilets.
- VicSRC could work with existing groups to provide resources to schools and encourage them to celebrate their queer community with events like Pride Month and IDAHOBIT day.
- VicSRC could campaign for guidelines to ensure that schools can offer specialised LGBTQI+ counselors.



Our environment is rapidly deteriorating and there is a lack of consensus and consistency on the best care practices that can be taught to students - this ignores the traditional practices and extensive historical and contemporary relationship Indigenous Australians have to the land.

- VicSRC could partner with organisations like AIME and the Indigenous Rangers to put schools in touch with their local Indigenous communities and create programs about their area.
- The Department of Education could provide grants to increase Indigenous environmental education through these partnerships
- Pre-colonial history could be incorporated into the humanities curriculum along with practical aspects of this knowledge, alworkshopped with Indigenous communities.



Gender inequality in educational settings affects all students - particularly when they are afforded different facilities and opportunities based on their gender. This discrimination contributes to ongoing stigma that can affect students all their lives.

- Gender equality could be included in the curriculum from an early age, for example, making gender identity and equality a topic in health classes and including texts addressing these issues in English classes.
- Professional development could be offered to teachers to encourage conversation around gender equality, consideration of gendered language and potential implicit bias.
- Education nights, conferences or seminars involving students, parents and teachers could be arranged to further encourage these conversations.



Education, particularly the VCE curriculum, currently works on a 'what, not how' model that causes stress and sleep deprivation to students. There are currently so many demands on students' time - along with distractions and avenues for procrastination - that students are struggling to manage their time.

- VicSRC could provide a guide of best practice for schools including things like giving notice before tests, exams, SACS and resources for teaching time management.
- VicSRC could partner with experts in the field to deliver seminars giving younger students the time management skills they will need as they get older.
- VicSRC could campaign for a change in the curriculum to include time management skills specifically pitched at students.



We say goodbye and good luck to our 2017-2018 Student Executive...



Cohen | Aayushi | Tiffany | Mia | Rames | Clare

Alyssa | Tobi | Bri | Alyssa | Anya | Wren | Angelique | Ryan

Will (not pictured)

...and welcome to our 2018-2019 Student Executive.



Bethany | Ashley | Laura | Mia | Zaituna

Mitchell | Bri | John-Paul | Tafara | Aaran

Liaqat | Julia | Wren | Michelle

Alyssa (not pictured)

























