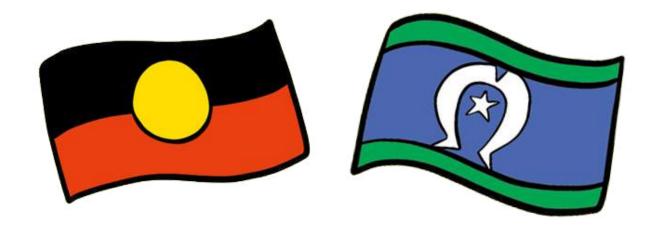


# LEARNING FROM REMOTE LEARNING: ROUND TWO





VicSRC acknowledges that our work takes place on Aboriginal lands never ceded, that our office sits on the Wurrundjeri lands of the Kulin Nation, and we recognise and pay respects to all Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of this beautiful country on which we learn, play and grow. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal lands.







### **CONTENTS**

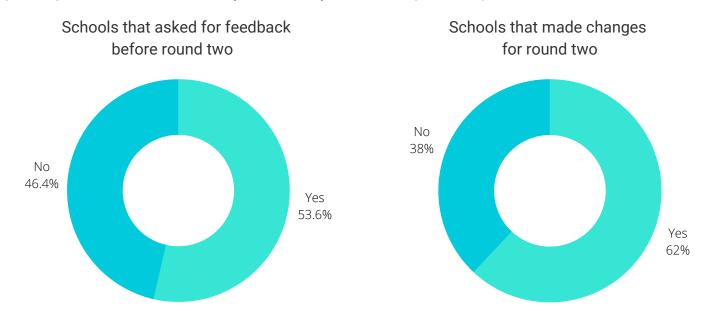
- 3 Introduction
- 5 Demographics
- 6 Comparing round one and round two
- 10 Impact on mental health
- 12 Changes made to remote learning in round two
- 15 SECTION 2
  VicSRC's Learning from
  Remote Learning
  report recommendations
- 16 Recommendations
- 23 Conclusion

### INTRODUCTION

VicSRC surveyed over 500 students in June 2020 towards the end of the first remote learning period and released our first Learning from Remote Learning report which included a number of recommendations based on student feedback.

From Wednesday 5th of August 2020, schools across Victoria restarted remote learning after a second wave of COVID-19 cases. While some students were permitted to complete their work on-site at school, the majority of students remained learning from home until the beginning of term 4 when a staggered return to face-to-face learning began.

This follow up report is based on 250 student responses during mid-late October as students began returning to face-to-face learning at school. Just over 40% of respondents participated in the first survey and nearly 60% were providing feedback for the first time.



As we saw in the report after the first round of remote learning, students' experiences of remote learning were vastly different depending on their circumstances and schools.

The responses indicated that for most students, their experiences during the second round of remote learning was either equal to or better than the first round. Just over 50% of students said their schools had asked them for feedback and around 60% reported that their schools had made changes to the second round of remote learning.

Unfortunately this means that nearly 50% of schools did not ask students for feedback and nearly 40% made no noticeable changes to learning remotely during the second round.



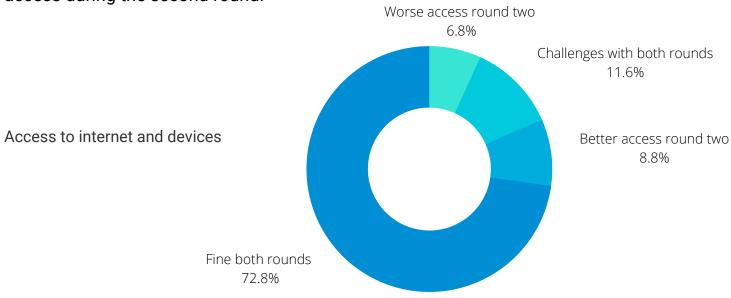
When asked about the areas addressed in the previous report recommendations, again a majority of students reported that things either stayed the same or improved. Use of online platforms and better understanding from schools around student technology challenges were the two areas that students reported were the most improved during the second round while access to mental health support and students experiencing agency over their data, bodies and learning environments improved the least.

Students identified a few key areas of support teachers and schools provided during the second round that had a great impact including:

- Introducing wellbeing check ins,
- · Changing timetable structure to allow for more breaks,
- · More flexibility from teachers around workload and technology challenges, and
- Extra support with learning when required.

While students reported there was some mental health support from schools, much of it seemed to consist of giving students information about services available once or twice during the remote learning period and expecting them to reach out if they needed help, rather than a proactive approach by teachers to see how students were managing.

Access to devices and internet were consistent with the first report responses in that a majority of students had access without issues during both rounds with only 6.8% reporting they had worse access and 8.8% reporting they had better access during the second round.

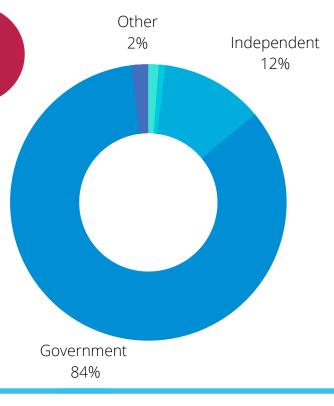


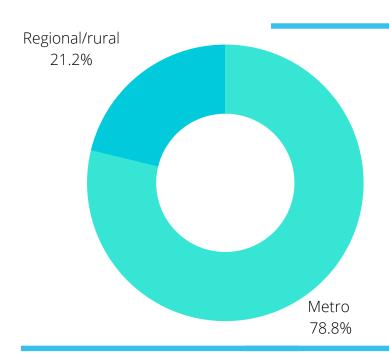




#### **SCHOOL TYPE**

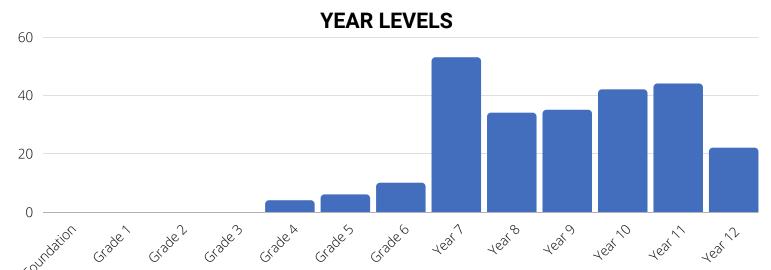
Government 210
Catholic 2
Independent 30
Specialist 3
Other 5
Total 250





#### **REGION OF SCHOOL**

Metro 197 Regional/rural 53 Total 250





## COMPARING ROUND ONE AND ROUND TWO

Students that found round one better reported feeling more motivated and having less academic pressure. They also enjoyed the novelty of remote learning because it provided a change in lifestyle and there were less social restrictions.

"the first round was kinda like a novelty; making bread, family walks, tik tok dances and taking up a new hobby. the second was really rough mentally and physically, the closer it got to the end, the more anxiety it caused for exams. " - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"I had more motivation during the first round of remote learning, despite it being a new environment I adapted easily & concentrated every class. As remote learning progressed, my concentration and attention span decreased to the point where I completely zoned out most classes. I viewed the second round of remote learning as more work and I'd be less motivated as I'd be on my laptop studying from 9am-9pm with breaks in between." - Year 11, govt, metro

"I was able to go out for rides with more than one friend. Round 1 was more fun."

- Year 7, govt, metro

"being in remote learning for the second round was harder as they are so close to exams." - Year 12, govt, metro

"The first round was the easiest because it was not to long and at the end of the term we got to go to school and see our friends whereas the second on was a whole term and we couldn't see our friends and it got harder and my mental health just got worse over time." - Year 7, govt, metro

"I think the first round was better, because it was the start of the pandemic and people were more motivated and interested as this was a fresh idea. While I feel the second round everyone was a little bit burnt out and didn't care as much."

- Year 9, govt, metro



Students that identified the second round as a better experience identified that it felt like everyone adjusted to working online and that things were more organised as well as teachers and schools adapting to feedback from the school community to improve learning the second time around.

"I was gradually getting used to off-site learning. Based on the experience of 1st round, I've acknowledged the best way to set up and my own schedule and execute my plan in this 2nd round, and it's been working really well." - Year 11, govt, metro

"The second round was much more easier because I got used to waking up and logging onto teams and doing my work and knew what I was doing." - Year 8, govt, metro

"The first round of learning was hard and confusing because it was new to me and everyone in my family were annoyed, angry and upset all the time because it was hard for my mum to teach us how to set up the online learning process on my iPad."

- Year 6, govt, metro

"because during the first round remote learning was new and the teachers and students didn't really know how or what to do whereas during the second round the teacher and students had a better understanding of what remote learning is and how it works." - Year 11, govt, metro

"I feel like the main reason was because by the second round, I personally had started to adjust to life in isolation." - Year 8, govt, metro

"Remote learning was very new and hard to adjust to. I struggled with adapting to learn at home. On the first round, I stayed up pretty late completing work because I wasn't able to manage my time. While at school, the work was more spread out and if you had any unfinished work you would have to finish it at home. However, at home my sleep schedule changed and I got more distracted, I started stressing more because I was afraid I would burden my teachers if I submitted work late, so I kept pushing through. I ended up working a lot longer than I was supposed too. But thanks to some students, they messaged teacher letting them know the work was a little too much, which the teachers listened and lessened it. In the second round of remote learning, I became less motivated so I found different approaches to complete my work. I eventually figured out a way to complete work within the five days and have at least some time to myself."

- Year 8, govt, metro



Students identified some of the changes teachers made that had a positive impact on the second round. These included better systems and structures for delivering learning, more one on one support and more opportunities to participate in non-academic activities that focused on wellbeing and social connection.

"The second round was better because my teachers realised that the workload was too large, and the class zooms were going for too long so they adjusted it for the second round." - Year 8, independent, metro

"Round two has been much better this far due to everyone's experience in remote learning from the first round. What has also helped a lot, is all the online platforms teachers have been able to find for us to use & the extra support from our teachers throughout the year. Another thing that has helped make the second round better is more teachers asking us to write notes in our books & even more opportunities to do work offline & submit it via a photo (or a few)." - Year 9, govt, metro

"Because we did more calls and I learnt more then." - Year 7, govt, metro

"this time was better because zoom goes for shorter periods of time."- Year 10, specialist, metro

"In the second round, we were more prepared for everything, and knew how it was going to work. We knew what we could do better, and what to change. One of those things was that zooms were only 20 minutes." - Year 7, independent, metro

"Because I learnt from my mistakes and was more efficient the second time around. Also we were allowed to use the "chat" function of teams the second time around which made contacting teachers significantly easier." - Year 10, govt, metro

"The second round was better as we ran more activities such as a photo of our desk, baking and guess which teacher the baby photo is competitions. Also, we had a running/walking and cycling competition. In class we have done more activities for brain breaks and more assistance/communication with teachers to check in how we are going." - Year 10, govt, metro



The majority of students found that the two rounds weren't significantly different for better or worse. Some students again reported feeling unsupported and losing motivation which led to feelings of stress and anxiety.

"They weren't able to help me with my learning properly. Instead of being shown demonstrations and such, I was to basically teach myself a majority of my learning this year, which in my opinion is lazy schooling (sorry)." - Year 9, govt, metro

"I fell really behind with the work and no-one noticed. I've done really badly on a test, and I don't know what they will do now." - Year 9, independent, metro

"Both periods of remote learning were very similar in feeling. During the first period, school work slowly accumulated, and I lost all of my motivation. Returning to school for a few weeks was a sigh of relief until another round of remote learning was imposed. My motivation was again gone and I am still behind in my classwork." - Year 11, govt, metro

"It honestly made it harder for me to focus on school. I completely lost motivation and hope for school or planning to go to uni. I don't know why but it makes me want to drop out of school as soon as possible! This doesn't mean I'm blaming remote learning for the changes in me and my perspectives but I believe things happen for a reason we'll just see where it leads me. :)" - Year 11, govt, metro

Other students found the experience empowering and felt that their schools did an excellent job supporting them.

"Our school was great at supporting us both rounds with the teachers working extremely hard to help us during these difficult times making it as easy as possible for us to learn from home." -Year 11, independent, metro

"I actually learned more at home than I did at school. I have a lot of trouble at school understanding and completing my work, Home learning there where no distractions or things slowing me down. I had more time to do my work well and on time. I ws able to understand more than I ever did at school." - Year 10, govt, metro

"IT WAS AWESOME! Honestly when I heard about going back to face to face learning I got worried I wouldn't be able to adjust! I loved online learning!" - Year 7, independent, rural/regional



### IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

Students' mental health had an increasing impact on their experiences of remote learning in the second round. The ongoing social restrictions led to decreased motivation and increasing ill mental health for some students. Some students reported school's increasing support and awareness while others felt they didn't get the support they needed during either round which had a negative impact.

"I personally felt less motivated and fell significantly behind in round two. This was mostly due to mental exhaustion and chronic levels of procrastination. I just wanted to say that teachers have been extremely understanding and empathetic of these sort of problems, and that they have really gone above and beyond both rounds to safeguard the mental health of students." - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"did slightly more work the first time but struggled throughout both due to an incident going on outside of school involving the justice system. I have no motivation and no care for school as i have been struggling mentally with most aspects of my life. School has become my last priority." - Year 12, govt, metro

"My mental health was declining and therefore by the time round two came along it was more difficult as I wasn't coping very well." - Year 10, govt, metro

"first round was better because in the second i didn't feel as supported by any of my teachers, and it took a toll on my mental health." - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"The first round was better as It hadn't been long since I got to communicate with others and I was still always active. But during the second round, I hardly socialized or felt like it, I didn't want to be around anyone." - Year 7, govt, metro

"I don't really expect anything great, since i'm in year 10 going into year 11. it always haunts me that i might fail this year and might repeat a year; (I have potiental, i know i do... but how are the teachers going to know that through just how work i hand in?" - Year 10, independent, metro (learned partly at school and partly at home)



Students reported a variety of supports schools offered during remote learning including access to counselling via phone, well being activities and communicating external support services available.

There was a number of students who reported limited to no access or communication of supports available during either rounds.

"More resources and tips for mental health were posted on compass for everyone to use." - Year 11, govt, metro

"Personally, I felt supported by my school, as teachers helped students get through the rough times together and urged students to reach out if they felt as though they were struggling." - Year 9, govt, rural/regional

"The school made sure it was known you could set up meetings with the well-being team." - Year 10, independent, metro

"In our year level group for SRC we did some mental health workshops for our year level." - Year 10, independent, metro

"They made sure that students knew how to access online wellbeing meetings and that our counsellors were still available throughout the entire week." - Year 10, govt, rural/regional

"Was great, we have psychologists and the helplines were shared around a lot." - Year 8, govt, metro

"I don't really need to go to the people at our school who help with mental health, but if I did I knew where and who to go to."
-Year 8, govt, rural/regional

"I've dealt with depression,felt suicidal and no teacher ask me anything, i don't know if the school has any mental health cooperators." - Year 7, govt, metro

"Even though the support of mental health stayed the same I feel like in the first place there wasn't much support anyways." - Year 9, govt, metro

"There was zero mental health awareness throughout online learning for what I can say, maybe 1 or 2 emails here and there saying that you can email the teachers if you are facing any mental health issues but there wasn't much to work with and really it just got worse with the work overload." - Year 7, independent, metro

"The only mental health support we have at school was mostly unavailable, however if we did get in touch with our teachers about feeling unmotivated they were fairly understanding." - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"I still spoke to our school councilor during the lockdowns over the phone, which isn't quite the same but still was a good way to conduct chats with the in-place limitations. Also unable to see regular psych due to larger waiting lists." - Year 12, govt, metro



## CHANGES MADE TO REMOTE LEARNING IN ROUND TWO

While VicSRC was disappointed that only 50% of schools asked their students for feedback when round two of remote learning began in August, many schools did parent and student surveys towards the end of the first round of remote learning which will have influenced changes made to the second round.

The students that did give feedback reported that it was around these areas:

- There needs to be less screen time and more breaks between online classes
- Changes needed to be made to teaching and learning
- The workload was too much
- More proactive mental health support

#### There needs to be more breaks between screen times

"We didn't get enough break from the screen in the first round." - Year 7, govt, metro

"We gave feedback and suggestions regarding the timetable and schedule which turned out really well." - Year 6, govt, metro

"My school added 5 minute intervals between each class: it was helpful as during the first round each class would be back to back and therefore increase my online class fatigue. It was nice to grab a snack and stretch a little before each class." - Year 11, govt, metro

"Zoom lessons were too long and I think there was also too much work as I found myself doing homework everyday after school for hours in addition to weekend homework." - Year 8, independent, metro

"My school allowed for more flexibility with what remote learning looked like. We were allowed to do more work in our books & then upload a photo of what we had done. The school have been even more interactive with students, setting up a school podcast! Although they were doing this before, it was only about one or two of our teachers."

- Year 9, govt, metro



#### Changes needed to be made to teaching and learning

"Yes, we spent more classes online instead of only having one per week. Some found it helpful as they could ask more questions and have more communications, yet it did also make it difficult with internet issues." - Year 10, govt, metro

"asked for more pre recorded classes." - Year 12, govt, metro

"That they should send out assignment schedules early in the week so that students weren't overwhelmed throughout the week." - Year 10, govt, regional

"I asked them to put up what we were doing in each lesson so that I could plan my week better." - Year 8, independent, metro

"allow a private chat function in Microsoft Teams so that students who are more timid can have better communication with teachers." - Year 11, govt, metro

"They created more video classes for each different class we had. I enjoyed this because we got to interact with our teachers more and ask questions if needed." - Year 10, govt, rural/regional

"My school made zoom sessions compulsory for every class during the week as opposed to optional zoom sessions for each subject each week during the first round. I found this helpful to make sure I don't go off track with my school work and stay in contact with my teachers." - Year 11, govt, metro

"They started using google classroom which made it much easier to find tasks set for us." - Year 7, govt, rural/regional

"There was more structure to our timetables and a lot more support from teachers." -Year 11, Catholic, metro

"The changed compass to make task searching easier and they made more video calls with students this time which helped." - Year 10, govt, metro

"My school made changes by cheering us up when we have meetings and made the school work look easier then it is by teaching it in another way." - Year 6, govt, metro



#### The workload was too much

"Lessen the work load and give us longer breaks to let our minds rest." - Year 8. govt, metro

"monitor workload (prevent long continuous hrs at desk after doing so for appx. 9hrs for school & promote more well-being activities)." - Year 11, govt, metro

"I've asked school to reduce student's workload as we've been struggling a lot studying online." - Year 11, govt, metro

"They cut down on the number of classes we had each week for each subject. It made it easier to handle the workload." -Year 10, govt, metro

"During the second round of online school, my school decided to remove one whole period each day and instead told us to use it, to 'get away from the screens, get up and have a stretch, go exercise, go rest your eyes and recover...' We all found this extremely useful, and used this period to our advantage. Apart from this great idea, my school didn't change much, apart from the fact that they 'reduced' the amount of homework and assignments given to students. I've put 'reduced' in apostrophes because for some students such as myself, it didn't feel like the amount of work was reduced at all..." -Year 9, independent, metro

#### More proactive mental health support

"Check in on mental health." - Year 12, govt, metro

"More activities to promote engagement also check ins with the teachers." - Year 10, govt, metro

"The changes that our school made were very much made from the individual teachers and principals and were focussed on the health and wellbeing of the students such as open wellbeing chat sessions, pre-made exercise lessons for children to do at anytime and also regular checkups every morning." - Year 6, govt, metro

"My school made mental health days were we did half a day of learning and the rest of the day to relax." - Year 8, govt, metro







#### **LEARNING FROM REMOTE LEARNING:**

## REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

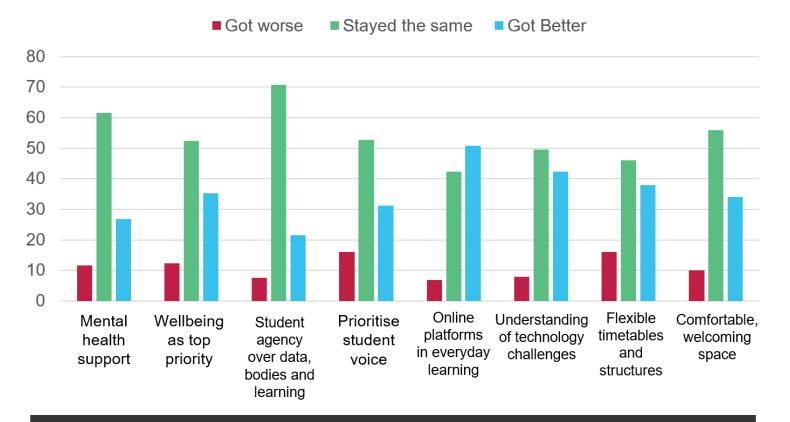


#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Our initial report included a number of recommendations for schools to consider accepting for the second round of remote learning:

- Support and progress student agency as a top priority within schools and within the education system.
- Ensure every student has access to devices and internet to support their learning at school and at home.
- Have online platforms as part of every day learning including detailed lesson plans and easier communication between teachers, students and parents/carers.
- Make sure mental health is just as important as academic success and include regular wellbeing classes for all students.
- Schools and timetables should be more flexible about how students learn including shorter school days and longer breaks between classes to rest and refocus.
- Create a comfortable, safe and welcoming space for every single student.

It is encouraging to see that many students reported positive changes in these areas but the majority reported that little to nothing had changed between rounds.





## Schools should ensure the wellbeing of students, staff, leadership and families is the number one priority over workload and academic outcomes.

"Definitely improved the second round as workloads were relaxed." - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"If a students mental health is getting in the way of their work, then teachers give them as little work as possible to try & help.

Teachers have also been understanding of the fact that work might not be up to a student usual standard & they have accommodated for that." - Year 9, govt, metro

"We have a wellbeing team who are all so lovely, they provide extra support for everyone and anyone." - Year 7, govt, metro



"I feel like as time went on SOME teachers cared less about the wellbeing of students and more about the work," -Year 9, govt, metro

"Mental illness issues seemingly doubled, my insomnia became much worse (2am at the latest on a regular day became 5-6am), scores dropped due to inability to communicate fully with teachers over problems, lack of resources, etc. Folio subjects have been heavily impacted, as my final production for Media is the 5th project since the start of the year (due to the instability of COVID restrictions repeatedly stopping all 4 other potential projects). Went from an 70-80 average last year to maybe 60-70 on a good day." - Year 12, govt, metro

"Some of the work they give us is just way too much and we focus on getting it finished rather than learning the concept and taking it in." - Year 7, govt, metro

"It seemed as though some teachers preferred us to get over the work load and then deal with our wellbeing when in reality, it should be the other way round."

- Year 9, govt, metro



## Students must have agency over their data, bodies and learning environments during remote learning.

"most teachers allowed us to work privately while others insisted we stay on call which can be disrupting for some." - Year 11, govt, metro

"Agency over data was alright, as our school used Google's services for most situations which kept things easy. In terms of body and environment, being forced to return to onsite learning has been a major issue for consistency, as well as health risks due to an immunocompromised parent. Environment at home has been up to students, and with on-site learning returned to normal classrooms." - Year 12, govt, metro

# Have online platforms as part of every day learning including detailed lesson plans and easier communication between teachers, students and parents/carers.

"Better, with the addition of google meet." - Grade 6, govt, metro

"The teachers were getting more comfortable with the platforms and the new updates helped learning." - Year 12, govt, metro

"Teachers started using a lot of different learning platforms like PearDeck and Google Classroom which increases engagement in class." - Year 10, govt, rural/regional

"We were required to either join a meet, or given a very detailed class plan. I noticed in round two that it felt like our teachers were much more available to assist us through lessons and outside of class times." - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"The online platforms were great and taught me quite a lot." - Year 6, govt, metro

"The online platforms were fine but some of the teachers weren't very cooperative with it, though its understandable if they are unsure how to work with the whole online learning system as it is new to us all. But I do wish the teachers had some sort of session or guidance on how to work with the online platforms." - Year 7, independent, metro



## Students must have agency over their data, bodies and learning environments during remote learning.

"Student voice has been able to improve due to the school podcast & a few more surveys than usual to encourage students to talk up about how the school could improve for remote learning." - Year 9, govt, metro

"The leadership team have still been having online meetings, organising free dress days, and attending school council meetings through both rounds!"

- Year 11, govt, regional/rural

"all meetings were cancelled, very little opportunity to give any feedback." - Year 11, govt, regional/rural

"The leadership program at school has been more than supporting and have still been imputing ideas from the captains and are continuing for out student voices to be heard even though the circumstances." - Year 9, govt, rural/regional

"We have a period dedicated to voicing our concerns every week." - Year 7, independent, metro

"I'm not sure about student voice, I don't think we're getting our voices heard during remote learning. I have so many ideas to share with my schools SRC but I can't see any offer or anyway in which I can express and/or present my idea to the SRC." - Year 11, govt, metro

"Our school has a newsletter that was introduced for quaratine during the first lockdown. It has been an AMAZING inclusion to the year, with articles, recipes and loads of quizzes and competitions for people to enter and win Uber Eats vouchers." - Year 11, govt, metro

"We had a focus group where the teachers listened to our feedback." - Year 10, govt, metro

"Student voice hasn't really been prioritised during these times throughout the year other than when welcoming the students back from 1st remote learning." - Year 11, govt, metro



#### Teachers and school leadership are understanding of the technology challenges faced by students and guarantee that no disciplinary measures will be taken in response to problems with internet and technology.

"Whenever I touched base after experiencing a tech difficulty teachers were understanding and sympathetic. I didn't experience tech problems round one, so this was definitely a relief!" - Year 11, govt, rural/regional

"horrible wifi, and many teacher never did or start microsoft teams calls so we were left with little knowledge on what to do. i think its because the teachers didn't know how to." - Year 10, govt, metro

"senior teachers should be given more guidance on how to navigate electronic devices." - Year 11, govt, metro

"Technology challenges were inevitable but most of the time, our school tried hard to improve, fix or avoid it." - Year 7, independent, metro

## Create a comfortable, safe and welcoming space for every single student.

"My school set up special co-curricular lessons for any students who wanted to start masterclasses or share interest eg. Yoga, Anime, Book Club." - Year 10, govt, rural/regional

"teachers are communicative with students, asking questions about their day, making jokes etc. Teachers are also willing to stay behind after class to talk to students who have any questions/and or are struggling/finding the class hard." - Year 12, govt, rural/regional

"As usual, my homeroom at school is extremely welcoming and I couldn't ask for anything more. My homeroom has topics for each day such as 'Motivational Monday,' 'Topic Tuesday,' 'Thankful Thursday...' this was great for our mental health - we stay engaged with each other and stay connected." - Year 9, independent, metro



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"Online learning was definitely safe but one thing I noticed is that some of the teachers nit picked certain students on answering a question because they are quiet or 'shy', but some students can also deal with anxiety problems which I think they need to be more aware of." - Year 7, independent, metro

"As usual, my homeroom at school is extremely welcoming and I couldn't ask for anything more. My homeroom has topics for each day such as 'Motivational Monday,' 'Topic Tuesday,' 'Thankful Thursday...' this was great for our mental health - we stay engaged with each other and stay connected." - Year 9, independent, metro





# Schools and timetables should be more flexible about how students learn, including shorter school days and longer breaks between classes to rest and refocus.

"We had long breaks between classes which were refreshing and school days started later and ended earlier than usual." - Year 7, independent, metro

"my school shorten the classes by fifteen minutes and used those fifteen minutes as breaks between classes." - Year 9, govt, metro

"Our classes have been cut down in the amount we have and lessons have shortened by 15 minutes." - Year 9, govt, rural/regional

"We have good breaks in between classes and are not forced to stay online for the entire school day (which is definitely good)." - Year 10, govt, rural/regional

"My school removed one whole period each day, for use students to use instead, to go have a break, get away from the screens, and stay healthy." - Year 9, independent, metro "I would say as the year comes to an end, the teachers are rushing to finish the courses and is speeding through the content without having breaks or rest. Sometimes a teacher takes up more time than others and when you get into the next class, it already started. It's pretty tight I would say." - Year 11, govt, metro

"timetable stayed the same even after longer breaks and shorter days were suggested." - Year 9, independent, metro

"Both rounds our teachers ensured that we were having breaks during each class where we could get up, stretch and make a cuppa, which was lovely as otherwise we could be sitting for up to 3 hours." - Year 11, govt, regional/rural



### CONCLUSION

While this report is a relatively small sample size of Victorian students, we believe that by hearing their experiences in their own words provides more depth to the data and can support transitions back to face to face learning as well as provide teachers, schools, parents and decision makers with some further insight into the positive and negative impacts this year has had on students.

It is encouraging to see that many schools made a real effort to improve the experience based on student feedback but disappointing to hear that a number of students felt like they had no opportunity to share their concerns or opinions.

For many schools student voice, agency and participation (and leadership) during remote learning seemed to be focused on wellbeing and motivating students rather than enabling opportunities for students to work with teachers to improve the experience for everyone.

VicSRC strongly encourages schools to prioritise the inclusion of students in decision making moving forward as this experience has given students unique experiences of how they best learn and could lead to a more innovative and inclusive education journey for everyone.





You can find our first **Learning From Remote Learning Report**, plus the supplementary **Returning to Remote Learning: recommendations and advice direct from students**, on the Student Voice Hub:

https://studentvoicehub.org.au/

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