



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024



## **RECOGNITION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES**

VicSRC works on the land of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we respect and acknowledge them as the traditional custodians of this beautiful country. We understand and respect that culture and connection to land and community is a right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that they also have a right to self-determination and cultural safety. We also recognise that Indigenous knowledge and perspectives need to be fully imbedded in our education system and curriculum.

# OUR VISION

Education that's flexible, relevant and includes all students in all decisions.

# OUR MISSION

We stand with and for students to elevate their voices to be heard.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Advocacy
2. Support
3. Partnerships
4. Inclusivity
5. Sustainability



## OUR PRINCIPLES

**Student centred** – Everything we do is based on what students want and need.

**Inclusive** - We are inclusive of all people, celebrate diversity and are respectful of different points of view.

**Innovative** - We seek creative solutions and always think of how things can be better.

**Independent** – We are our own organisation and we have our own ideas.

**For purpose** – Any money we receive goes back into making the organisation better.

## WHO WE ARE

Victorian Student Representative Council LTD was created by students to be a voice for students at the highest levels of decision making in Victorian education. VicSRC is led by a team of 15 secondary school aged students (**VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee**) that make decisions collaboratively with a group of six adults (**VicSRC Board of Trustees**) about how VicSRC operates, what programs it offers and how it hears from students about what changes need to be made in education. A team of staff members put these decisions into action with consistent advice from the **Student Executive Advisory Committee**.

## HOW WE WORK TOGETHER



## HOW WE WORK AND WHAT WE VALUE

Integrity and respect  
Learning and growth  
Honesty and transparency  
Dedication and energy  
Collaboration

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY

**WE** is VicSRC as an organisation. This includes our Student Executive Advisory Committee, our Board of Trustees, our staff team, our Student Ambassadors, our student community and our adult volunteers.

**AGENCY** is when people have control over the decisions in their own lives. When students have agency, it means that they get to make decisions about how, when and what they learn as well as how they are treated in education.

**LEADERSHIP** means representing other people by actively listening to them, hearing what they say and presenting their views to others. It also means making sure things get done when they need to.

**GOVERNANCE** refers to decisions that are made together by people representing different groups in the community.

**SYSTEM** is a collection of things (organisations/people) working together for a common purpose.

**ADVOCACY** is speaking out on behalf of or in support of others. People can also be self-advocates and speak out for themselves.

**STAKEHOLDERS** refers to people or organisations that care about or are impacted by the work you do.

**STUDENT VOICE** is an umbrella term we use when we talk about anything that includes students in decision making.

That includes:

- Listening and hearing what students think, want and need
- Involving students in lesson planning and developing curriculum
- Sharing student feedback with students to encourage discussion
- Active and supported student roles in all levels of school governance
- Students being agents of their own learning and education
- Students and adults working in partnership in all areas of learning





# ADVOCACY



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

because students are the biggest stakeholders in education but don't have regular opportunities to share their knowledge and feedback with the people making decisions. Almost all the decisions that affect students' experiences of learning and school are made by adults who aren't experiencing how education happens to students right now, which is why it is so important to make sure students are involved. We share the opinions, feedback and ideas of students across Victoria.

### **We do this by**

- Regularly meeting with and advising education decision makers, including the Minister for Education, about issues impacting students' education experience and learning.
- Providing regular opportunities for students to share their views with each other and VicSRC so there is an ongoing shared understanding of what Victorian students want and need.
- Sharing what students think, want and need in learning and education through media, VicSRC publications, formal submissions to government and by telling people who care about young people, including schools.

### **We'll know we're doing a good job when**

schools and other education organisations regularly ask students for their views, ideas and opinions before, during and after making decisions.

# SUPPORT





## **We support primary and secondary students to be active decision makers**

because school aged students have limited opportunities to be active participants in decision making around their learning. Research demonstrates that students who have agency over their own education and learning are more engaged and successful at school. Learning is more relevant and exciting when students direct it.

### **We do this by**

- Providing opportunities for students to mentor each other, collaborate and share experiences of what works and what doesn't.
- Through training, events and resources, we encourage and support students to be involved in all decisions affecting their education in their classroom, school and at the state level.
- Sharing great examples of decision making in education where students have a central role.
- Support and encourage all students to be leaders and advocates who work hard to include every student voice in decision making.

### **We'll know we're doing a good job when**

education settings in Victoria have consistent policies and practices in place that empower and enable students to be active decision makers in all areas of education and learning.



# PARTNERSHIPS







## **We help adults work better in partnerships with students**

because the system is designed by adults and students still experience barriers and rejections when they ask for change. To create effective and honest partnerships, we need to support adults to listen, discuss, respect and share power with students. When students and adults work together in education, the experience is empowering for everyone involved.

## **We do this by**

- Providing resources and training for adults to be more effective partners in education.
- Increasing the ability of adult staff and volunteers at VicSRC to work in partnership with students.
- Advocating for systemic change to provide more opportunities and access for students to work in partnership with adults.

## **We'll know we're doing a good job when**

adults and students working in partnership is the norm in Victorian education settings rather than the anomaly.





# INCLUSIVITY

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

because it's fair and right. We need to hear the views, experiences, ideas and needs of all students and too many miss out on opportunities because of barriers to access.

### **We do this by**

- Asking students what they need to fully participate in our work.
- Building our knowledge and skills as an organisation about the barriers to access and how to address these.
- Continually improving and adapting our practice and processes to be more accessible and sharing these with others.

### **We'll know we're doing a good job when**

we have active and meaningful representation in our work from many different communities of students.





# SUSTAINABILITY



## **We are a sustainable organisation**

because we want VicSRC to be the voice for generations of Victorian students and we want to model good practice. Sustainability to us means we care about how we operate, why we operate and the impact we are having on the world.

## **We do this by**

- Creating a strong governance model that keeps students at the centre of decision making while providing support, guidance and mentoring from experienced adults.
- Having multiple forms of income so we aren't reliant on one source.
- Using thoughtful and consistent recruitment, induction and HR processes for staff and volunteers so that our people are well informed, well treated and empowered in their work.
- Regularly evaluating our programs, events and advocacy to ensure we are relevant and effective.

## **We'll know we're doing a good job when**

students engaged in our organisation feel empowered and supported, adults engaged in our organisation work in partnership with students, and we have funding that comes from different places.

# OPPORTUNITIES!

- We're a newly incorporated body (after 15 years of being auspiced) and have a governance model with youth/adult partnerships firmly imbedded.
- Student Voice is a high priority in education policy in Victorian and nationally.
- We have strong relationships with organisations in the youth and education sector who are keen to find ways to work together.
- We have national and international interest in our Teach the Teacher program and governance model.

# AND POSSIBILITIES

We'd love to explore these areas...

- Increasing our reach and presence in rural and regional Victoria.
- Connecting, collaborating and creating ideas for a better education with Victorian primary school students.
- Partnering with students to enhance teacher and pre-service teacher training.
- Innovative digital products to enhance and increase the opportunities for students to engage in our work.
- VicSRC students as guest speakers to talk about student voice and our work in schools and other education settings.

# CHALLENGES

These are some of the things that make our work harder.

As “Student Voice” becomes more of a priority in education, it also opens the door for organisations to sell products that help schools and education settings “do” student voice. At VicSRC, Student Voice is a holistic approach to education and can’t be “done” to students – it becomes an integral part of the shared decision-making culture in all parts of education.

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The education system is based on a western model of education that has changed little in over 100 years. Decisions are generally made by adults sitting around boardroom tables using jargon. This means it can be difficult for all environments we work in to be fully inclusive and culturally safe.

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We recognise that our work (and sometimes our name) often appeals to students who are highly engaged in education and the environment our work is situated in can be a barrier for some students.

Our governance model puts students at the centre of strategic decision making, however there are challenges associated with short office terms (12 months) and limited governance experience. This means that there is a risk that their role can be tokenistic and decisions can be too influenced by adults. This also can create challenges for staff who need decisions to be made to be able to continue to carry out their work plan and the organisation’s strategic plan but don’t want to unduly influence the students. Our commitment to student leadership means that we are always trying to improve the way we work together so students feel empowered to be engaged at all levels of the organisation.

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We are a small organisation trying to represent around 1 million students, which means the demand for our work is often beyond our resources.

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Short term funding means we are limited in our ability to provide ongoing contracts for staff and have strategic multi-year work plans.

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We find it difficult to measure the long term impact of our programs and advocacy due to our limited resources.



# OUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

## STUDENTS

Our work is always centred around what students tell us they want, need and think about education.

## EDUCATION AND YOUTH FOCUSED ORGANISATIONS

We work in partnership and alongside many organisations that support young people in education to ensure as many views and voices are captured and shared as possible.

## EDUCATORS

Parents, teachers, school leadership, youth workers, school staff. We are committed to encouraging and supporting collaboration between the whole school community to make sure education works for everyone.

## VICTORIAN LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

We work closely with the Department of Education and Training, who not only provide a majority of our core funding but also support us to run programs and events, as well as create resources all of which are co-designed with students. We also have partnerships many local councils across Victoria who support our mission.

# THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FOR DEVELOPING THIS PLAN

2018/2019 VicSRC Student Advisory Committee

2019/2020 VicSRC Student Advisory Committee

2020 VicSRC Student Ambassadors

VicSRC Staff Team

VicSRC Board of Trustees

VicSRC Strategic Plan working group (former students, staff, Board, VicSRC volunteers and current students)