

**Student Opinions on Lowering the
Voting Age
August 2018**

About VicSRC

The Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) is the peak body representing students in Victoria. The VicSRC's vision is a world where all children and young people have access to education that is student-led, student driven and student focussed. The organisation exists to empower all student voices to be valued in every aspect of education. The VicSRC is auspiced by the Youth Affairs Council Victoria, and funded through the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET).

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Students should be allowed to vote in elections between 16 and 18.

Current research (like the [What's Up in Your World](#)) survey shows that young people are increasingly disengaged from institutional politics. While student voice, student agency and grassroots political engagement is increasing across the world fewer young people identify with political parties and fewer young people feel that they understand the political system. This ongoing disenfranchisement is dangerous – it alienates young people from the policies that will affect them for the rest of their lives and reduces student voice and agency not only in education but in the wider world of politics.

The perceived correlation between age and maturity is false.

Critics of lowering the voting age argue that teenagers lack the ability and motivation to participate in elections. But sixteen year olds know just as much as eighteen year olds about what we need in our lives, what we want from politicians and it's hard to see a reason why we shouldn't have a say about who's in power. If we were to allow these sixteen and seventeen year olds the right to vote, could that raise interest in politics?

Pairing a lower voting age with civics engagement through schools provides a much more stable early voting experience. To build a well-informed electorate a mix of curriculum based information on the structure of government and a personal stake in elections is vital.

We need to defeat the stigmas surrounding today's sixteen year olds.

It is possible for someone to make an uninformed vote, but is there such thing a wrong vote? Given the right to vote, some sixteen year olds would make uninformed decisions, but not every 'adult' vote is well informed. There are lots of people who really treasure having a say in a democracy, that's what it's all about. Sixteen year olds have just as much capacity to have a say as eighteen year olds. Currently sixteen year olds and teenagers are represented in state government through the VicSRC and every year at our main event Congress there are students from all over the state, from all different demographics, who know the political issues and know their stance on them.

There's no shortage of interest from sixteen year olds who really want to be politically active.

We can already do so many things that young adults are allowed to do. We are able to work, leave school, drive, live on our own, join the army and even get married and have children at the age of 16, but we can't vote. We're considered juvenile and much too immature to have any say in our country's governance. People seem to forget that we also want what is best for our country. We're the ones that are going to have to deal with the decisions being made right now. We know where we stand on marriage equality, we have opinions on climate change policy, we care about university fees and student intake caps.

Sixteen is a milestone age in society and young people can be so powerful - we're a generation of game changers. Young people are talking about the big issues and are putting forward coherent arguments. A lot of parliamentary decision making doesn't factor in young people and our views are not reflected in Parliament as much as they could be. There are people who really want to have a say in our democracy, who really want to put their beliefs out there.

It's time to make sure we're heard.

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All ages listed indicate the age at the time the comments were made.