



VicSRC Congress:

Your chance to set the agenda!

Friday 31 July - Saturday 1 August; Oasis Camp, Mt Evelyn

Congress 09 is nearly upon us, with just a couple of weeks to go before students from across Victoria gather on **Friday July 31st and Saturday August 1st**. At the time of writing there are still a few places available so if you haven't already registered, contact the office urgently to secure your place – 03 **9267 3744** or email: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au

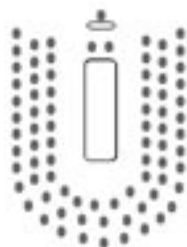
From the registrations already received, the most popular issues include

- How to make schools more environmentally friendly;
- Developing proactive student-led approaches to prevent bullying;
- Engaging students in SRC activities and in the classroom; and
- Changes to the youth allowance.

Are these the issues that are important to you? Then come and have your say!

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike will be attending part of the Congress to hear student concerns directly.

If not, then come and tell us what you think should be on the agenda! The Congress is all about students having the opportunity to raise whatever is important to them and thus **setting the agenda for the VicSRC** – your statewide organisation – for the next 12 months.



The Congress is also where a new **student executive** will be elected, so if you want to be involved in helping to lobby government on student issues or assisting other SRCs to become more effective, come to Congress and **stand for election to the VicSRC Executive**.



VicSRC Constitution

After operating as an informal network for the last three years, the VicSRC Executive has decided it is time to establish a formal structure for our student body.

A **Draft Constitution** for the VicSRC has been prepared, and this will be put to a vote of VicSRC members at this year's Congress. The Constitution outlines who can be a member, their rights and responsibilities, the process of electing the VicSRC Executive and the powers and duties of Executive members.

This is an important document and a historic step for the VicSRC.

All member SRCs will be sent a copy of the draft constitution before the Congress so that thorough consideration can be given by each member. Only paid-up VicSRC member SRCs will be allowed to vote on the constitution – **so make sure you are a member**.

Note: just because you receive this newsletter does not mean you are a member! This newsletter is sent to all secondary schools in Victoria, free of charge. To check your SRC's membership status or to request a membership form, contact the office on **9267 3744** or email: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au

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Make sure your SRC is represented!

VicSRC Regional SRC Conferences 2009

The VicSRC has recently held regional student conferences in Bendigo, Leongatha, Wodonga and Kew. These have been an opportunity for students to gather in local groups, and discuss the local, regional, and even national issues that they are facing both as students and SRC representatives. A further conference, planned for the Western Metropolitan area, was shaping up to be of epic proportions, but due to swine flu fears, was postponed until term three.

Some reports are included here from the conferences that have been held so far.

Leongatha - South Gippsland

The **Issue Workshops** have been the focal point of engaging and passionate discussions on the day, and some common themes have arisen in many conferences. Solutions have been suggested and debated, and passionate argument has almost always ensued. The most common issues suggested have included:

- **Bullying.** A particular focus has been on cyber bullying, which has been identified as a difficult area to improve. An idea suggested in Leongatha was for further teacher education surrounding bullying issues, and this showed strong student support.
- **Uniforms.** The age-old problem! Students have had many complaints: the current uniform is uncomfortable, is changed too often or is ugly. Most students agreed that a student consultation on uniform changes should be introduced.
- **Littering.** This proved a hard problem to tackle. Suggestions varied from 'more bins' to 'canteens labeling items sold with student names', so

particular students can be punished. No conference yet has managed to get a motion passed regarding this issue, as it seems schools have tried numerous approaches and nothing yet has been seen to work well.

From this and other regional conferences, information has been gained as to what issues students find important in Victorian schools. These issues will be taken to the statewide Congress, and help inform the VicSRC Executive in putting forward student views to government and other bodies.

Thank you to everyone who is participating in these conferences. You are not only improving your SRCs, gaining knowledge and forging links to one another, but making your voice heard across Victoria!

Kel Mitchell

Eastern Melbourne Regional Conference

Over 40 Students attended the Eastern Melbourne Regional Conference at Genezzano College in Kew. It was a great day, with students enjoying the opportunity to meet students from other schools. The schools came from such a broad geographical area that some students had never even heard of each others' schools before, so there was a lot of finding out to do about how different schools ran their SRCs.

The main issues raised were around bullying, littering and school facilities. Across all the issues, students are seeking a role in managing the problem and are willing to be involved in directly addressing the issue, provided that there are systems and support in place so that their participation is effective. One resolution called for student management of student common rooms. Participants put the case that, at senior level, they are responsible and mature enough to look after their own spaces – if they are given



the opportunity and responsibility for doing so. What is the point of a student common room if students can't make the rules?

Other proposals proved more controversial and students debated several at length before voting them down. However this proved a useful process for understanding the multiple points of view involved and generated plenty of ideas for students to implement back at their schools.

Western Melbourne Regional Conference

Unfortunately the Western Melbourne Conference had to be cancelled due to the outbreak of H1N1 Swine Flu. It is hoped that this conference can be re-scheduled for a date later in term 3, however no date has been set as yet. Information will be sent to all relevant schools as it comes to hand.

James Tonson

Other Areas

Further conferences are in the pipeline for **Whittlesea** and **Bayside** but dates for these events have not yet been confirmed.

If none of these locations are close enough to you and you are able to assist with hosting or organising a conference in your area, please contact the VicSRC on **03 9267 3744** or email **conferences@vicsrc.org.au**

Wodonga Regional SRC Conference

The Wodonga Regional VicSRC conference was held on the 16th June in the Music and Dance Centre at Wodonga Senior Secondary College. Approximately 50 students attended – from across the North-East region, including from Bright, Beechworth and Tallangatta.

It was a successful day with plenty of discussion among the students. Topics covered included bullying, the variety of lunchtime activities, lack of school pride and the poor state of school facilities. Students participated in a mini-Congress in which the passion of students was clearly demonstrated by the detailed and, at times, very vocal discussion.

A big thank you to conference coordinator Alex Sellar; without her efforts, this day would not have been so successful.

Lastly, I encourage as many rural students as possible to attend our state Congress at the end of July, as it is imperative that we are fairly represented at the state level.

Holly Burr



Bendigo Rural SRC Conference

On Wednesday the 20th May, a rural SRC Conference was held at Bendigo Senior Secondary College. The day began at 9.45 when 60 eager students from Bendigo and surrounding areas gathered to participate in a day full of fantastic activities.

The students learnt skills on how to make their SRCs more successful, as well as learning about other schools' activities and gaining ideas from each other. It was great to hear some of the ideas that SRCs had, as well as some of the amazing activities they were doing in their schools and communities to make a difference.

There was also a mini Congress held, which was very beneficial. Many motions were moved and passed, including a great debate about uniform policy. We are looking forward to hearing more opinions about this at Congress.

At the Conference, Councillor James Reade was the guest speaker. This year he was elected to the Bendigo Council. James is 19 and very passionate about youth and his community. It was fantastic to hear from a young person and his inspiring story of the amazing things that he had achieved and the difference that he had made in his community.

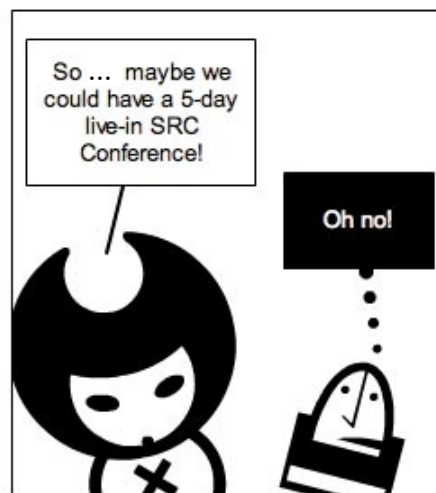
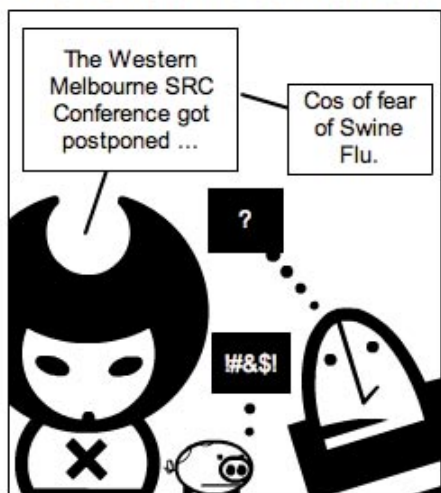
We would like to thank the schools that attended the Bendigo Conference: Bendigo Senior Secondary College, Bendigo South West Secondary College, Braemar College, Castlemaine Secondary College - Senior and Junior Campuses, Eaglehawk Secondary College, Girton Grammar School and Weeroona College Bendigo. Also thanks to Ray from *Lead On*, James Reade (guest speaker), James Tonson and Kel Mitchell (VicSRC) for being such fantastic facilitators of the day and Bendigo Senior Secondary College for allowing us to use their premises.

I learnt many things about having a successful SRC, as did all the other students who attended. The Conference is a fantastic opportunity to get a better understanding of the VicSRC as well as to make your SRC more successful. A cluster will hopefully start up in Bendigo very soon, where representatives from schools in and around Bendigo will be able to regularly share ideas and make a difference in their community.

So what are you waiting for? Be inspired, learn new skills and make your SRC as successful as it can possibly be. **Book now for your own local VicSRC Conference.**

Emma Lewis

The Pandemic Strikes Back!



www.stripgenerator.com

If you receive this newsletter, it doesn't necessarily mean you're a member of the VicSRC!

Two copies are sent to **all** secondary colleges in Victoria, four times a year - so pass one around your SRC representatives and put one up on the SRC noticeboard!

To find out if your SRC is a member of the VicSRC, call the VicSRC office (see contact numbers below).

VicSRC Members

The VicSRC welcomes the following new members:

- Keilor Downs Secondary College
- Myrtleford P-12 College
- Sunbury Downs Secondary College
- Tintern Girls' Grammar School



Join the VicSRC

There are many practical benefits from being a VicSRC member. You get copies of *Connect* magazine every two months (the most recent copy was mailed to schools at the end of last term), plus discounts to all VicSRC events, discounts on training through *Second Strike* (a VicSRC partner), membership to *YACVic* and *YouthLaw*, plus many other benefits ... If in doubt, phone the VicSRC office and check your membership status.

Not a member? Become one NOW!

You should join the VicSRC because ...

- ***we all benefit from working together - we can help each other;***
- ***we can speak more confidently to the Government on behalf of secondary students;***
- ***there are great economic and practical benefits for your SRC.***

Check the VicSRC website for membership details and forms:

www.vicsrc.org.au

This issue of the VicSRC Student Advocate was edited by Ashlee Frye and Georgia Kennelly.

Meet Some Executive Members:

Caitlyn Thorne

This year, I'm in Year 12 at Pakenham Secondary College. At the moment, I'm President of our school's Student Leadership Council (SLC) and have been elected to it since Year 9.



I heard about the VicSRC last year from another student at the school, and decided to get involved so that I could **make a difference**. In Year 10, I was coordinator of the school's Henty Lilypond Restoration and Outdoor Classroom project, so it was natural that I've taken on the **Environment Portfolio** in the VicSRC Executive.

I'm also a Rover Scout and a cub leader in our local Scout Troop.

Stacey Dight

I'm from Epping Secondary College, where I am currently completing Year 12 VCE. I am in my school's SRC and have been in it since 2007.



Last year I was nominated to attend the VicSRC Congress, and there I decided to join the VicSRC Executive. I chose to do this because of the **opportunities** that would arise from being in the group, and because it creates a fun environment of fellow young people **helping out in the schools** around Victoria. In the VicSRC Executive, I am responsible for the area of Healthy food in school canteens.

I also like to spend my spare time four wheel driving, hunting, also just mucking around on the farm and fixing things up slowly.

You!

You're in Years 7 to 11 at a Victorian secondary school.

You have a **passion** for representing students and their interests; you're excited to be **active** in an important portfolio area.

"I joined the VicSRC Executive because I believe students can make a difference to education."

You're willing to attend Executive meetings, mainly in Melbourne, for the next 12 months, mainly on weekends or during school holidays.

You're **standing for election** to the VicSRC Executive at the VicSRC Congress in July-August 2009!

Put yourself here!

Contact us:

The **VicSRC** is based at the *Youth Affairs Council of Victoria* (YACVic) and can be reached there on 03 **9267 3744** or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on **1300 727 176** or by email: **vicsrc@yacvic.org.au**