

VicSRC student advocate

www.yacvic.org.au/vicsrc

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Victorian Student
Representative Council

VicSRC Congress: Secondary Students Get Together

The second Congress of the VicSRC in May will bring together hundreds of secondary students from across Victoria to share information, to discuss and debate issues of importance, and to decide directions for your organisation.

The Congress will be held at **Collingwood Town Hall** (Hoddle Street, Abbotsford - just near the Collingwood Railway Station) on **Friday 18th May 2007**. All SRCs are entitled and encouraged to be represented.

The cost for the day will be \$15 per head for VicSRC member SRCs and \$25 per head for non-members. This includes lunch and morning tea, plus all materials and GST.

The issues to be discussed and debated at the Congress will be set by YOU - students in SRCs across the state. You might lead a discussion and tell others about what you're doing and/or what you're passionate about. You might suggest ways in which other students can get involved. You might propose a motion for action to be taken by the VicSRC, by local or state government or by the Education Department.

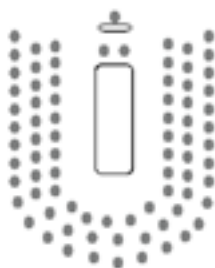
The last VicSRC Congress was held in 2005. Some of the decisions and subsequent action taken are reported in this newsletter.

What you need to do ...

You need to make sure your SRC is represented at the Congress. Up to two delegates from a school will be able to attend. A **Registration Form** is attached - send it in now!

Secondly, discuss and decide on the **issues** you think the Congress needs to talk about. Suggest topics on the registration form. Offer to lead a workshop about something you're working on.

Thirdly, keep in touch. We'll let you know about the final workshop topics and ask you to consult with your SRC and students about these. Come to the Congress with ideas and advice.



2005 Congress Decisions

Representatives at the 2005 Congress proposed over 27 motions. Of these, 10 were debated and 6 were accepted. They included:

"That all SRCs from each school should come together to inform and collect ideas from one another, to form a working network."

Action: The VicSRC has continued to exist, has set up clusters, has obtained some funding to help this happen, and is organising this Congress.

"That the VicSRC establish a website inclusive of a forum, to enable the exchange of SRC related issues and advice, and to provide for inter-school support when taking issues to decision-making bodies!"

Action: The VicSRC has established its website at www.yacvic.org.au/vicsrc and is moving towards adding such a forum in Phase 2 of its development.

"That students be represented on School Councils."

Action: The VicSRC advocated this position to the recent Review of School Councils. It was not adopted by the Department of Education, but the VicSRC continues to be involved in discussions around this issue.

(If you want a copy of the full Congress Report, ask us.)

A vital opportunity

This Congress provides students from all secondary schools in Victoria with the opportunity to get together to learn from each other, to share, discuss, debate and decide. It will set the agenda for the future!

VicSRC State Congress

for secondary school students ... Make sure you're represented!

Friday May 18, 2007; 9 am - 3 pm

Collingwood Town Hall

Hoddle Street, Abbotsford

\$15 per person for VicSRC members; \$25 per person for non-members

VicSRC Briefings

Two important VicSRC meetings have been held recently.

The first meeting was a background briefing for individual secondary students who might be interested to become active within the VicSRC - on the Executive, or in planning the Congress.

Sharon reports:

"Well, I finally got to meet some other students who were as enthusiastic (and crazy) as I am about SRCs. The VicSRC is such a great idea.

"We heard about some of the background of the group and the hopes for the power it can give students. We looked over the plans for the VicSRC Congress and made some changes and suggestions for what could happen there. I hope I can meet more of you at the Congress."

Next student meeting

Lucas adds:

"We're meeting again on **Wednesday March 21st** at the VicSRC Office - at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, level 2, 172 Flinders Street in the city - it's right opposite Federation Square. The meeting will be at 5 pm, so students can get there after school and we'll try to finish by 6.30 pm at the latest. You're extremely welcome to come along ... maybe call James first to let him know. We're particularly interested to involve students from rural areas - and some travel subsidies are available."

Support Groups

The other meeting brought together 12 representatives from Youth Services, LLENs and so on from across Victoria, and this discussed ways in which such groups can support local VicSRC clusters. There was strong interest and support and the first meetings in these clusters are about to occur in several areas.

Ask about any meetings happening in your area - or offer to host one!

Coming to the Congress?

What you need to do ...

Register:

- ♦ Tell us *now* that your SRC will be represented at the Congress.
- ♦ Fill in the registration form included with this newsletter.

Suggest topics:

- ♦ Within the SRC, discuss what topics should be raised at the Congress.
- ♦ If possible, find out what other students think are important topics.
- ♦ Think about topics at SRC, school and community levels.
- ♦ Fill in the registration form with your suggestions.

Offer:

- ♦ To lead a discussion group at the Congress around a topic.
- ♦ Use the registration form to offer to present.

Proposals:

- ♦ Start working on some proposals for what students through the VicSRC could or should be doing on these topics.
- ♦ There will be more information on this in the next newsletter.

Nominate:

- ♦ **As a state representative:**
Think about nominating yourself or a fellow student for the VicSRC Executive.
- ♦ **As a local representative:**
Think about offering to help set up a local cluster group of the VicSRC.

A Registration Form is included with this Newsletter. Fill this in and return it to the VicSRC by the end of Term 1 - the end of March.

Draft Congress Outline

Plans for the 2007 VicSRC Congress include:

A meeting and sharing session

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Two sessions of **workshops** on issues raised by students:

- SRC issues
- School-based issues
- Community issues

...

Information and Discussion about the VicSRC and how it operates

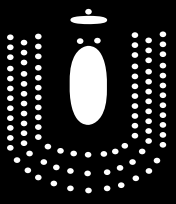
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Preparation of motions

...

LUNCH

...



Congress Session:
a formal parliamentary-style debate to establish priorities and policies for the VicSRC

...

Election of VicSRC Executive members

...

Planning meetings within local clusters

You will take away ...

Contacts and friendships around the state

Information about other SRCs

Shared experiences in running consultations

Knowledge, skills, information and ideas about SRC, school and community issues: strategies based on students' experiences

Ideas about how your SRC can work with others locally and across the state to be more effective

Skills in preparing arguments and formal motions

A full stomach to energise your full brain!

Experience in formal decision-making around shared ideas and commitments on important issues

Representation of your voices and interests

Opportunities to start meeting with nearby schools that share your concerns

How to Consult Students

SRCs are asked to consult with students about many issues. For the VicSRC Congress, we are asking you to consult with students about the topics to be discussed and later about their views on these issues.

By consulting with students, you make sure that the ideas you raise are supported by others; you speak as their representative, not just for yourself.

There are many ways to organise an effective consultation. You can do it *face-to-face*, through a *survey*, through a voluntary *suggestion box*, through an *on-line website* or *survey* and so on. Make sure that **all** students have an opportunity to contribute, not just your friends, or those with access to a computer.

First: talk with students! You could do this one-on-one (not just with your friends) informally, at lunchtime, after school and so on. You could also do this in small groups - still informally. More formally, each SRC representative could do a consultation with students in their **home groups** or classes. Representatives should be reporting back to students, and this is an opportunity to ask questions and invite responses. (Some of the issues may be useful topics for discussion within English or other classes - ask the teacher if this can happen.) Organising discussions such as 'brainstorms' or 'debates' can make this even more formal. Appoint someone to keep notes of all the ideas that are raised.

A simple **survey** that is given to all students and that is anonymous, can enable quiet or shy students - who might not speak up in discussions - to provide responses. Make sure that the questions are *clear, simple and relevant*.

How will you allow students to answer? 'Closed' answers (where students tick one of several options that you provide) are easy for you to add up but they can limit the range of possible ideas from students. If you want students to choose between some set options (eg which of 10 set issues is most important) this might be useful. However, leave space at the end for students to write in extra answers. 'Open' answers (where students write their own response) allow for more ideas, but are harder to analyse. These are more appropriate for questions about 'why?' You can, of course, combine closed and open responses - and work out which is the most appropriate for what you want to know.

When you add up the responses, you can also analyse and report these by year level, gender etc, so you can find out if some topics are more important to some groups of students in the school.

Make sure you let students know the outcome of a consultation - **report back**. This can also be a useful step in the consultation as you ask students: '*Did we get it right?*'

Join the VicSRC

Not a member of the VicSRC?

There are many direct benefits of membership.

Check the VicSRC website for details, or call James at the VicSRC Office (see below). Membership forms were sent to all schools earlier this year.

Do you have an SRC Webpage?

Some SRCs have asked the VicSRC for information about individual SRC web sites or web pages. We would be interested to put a link to your SRC web page from the VicSRC web pages. (We would also be interested for you to include a link to the VicSRC site on *your* webpage.)

Email the URL of your SRC web page to us: vicsrc@yacvic.org.au

You could also tell us about any links to other sites you have found useful.

Contact us:

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

Aims of the VicSRC

To strengthen SRCs

To be a representative body for Victorian secondary school students

To facilitate and co-ordinate action by secondary students at all levels

To be democratic and participatory

Visit the VicSRC Website:

www.yacvic.org.au/vicsrc