

6th Annual VicSRC Congress

Educating, Enriching, Enthusiating!

2011 saw the VicSRC's first ever three day Congress!

From Friday the 5th to Sunday the 7th August, the VicSRC Congress at Oasis Campsite, Mt Evelyn became the place to be for secondary school student representatives from across Victoria. With special guests such as the Hon. Martin Dixon, Minister for Education, also attending, it was a huge accomplishment and a blast for everyone! Congress was also lucky to be supported by a dedicated crew of volunteers who worked tirelessly over the weekend to make sure the busy program ran smoothly.

The first day witnessed the start of many new friendships, the excitement of brand new ideas and a little healthy competition between respective colour groups. It was great to see many new and familiar faces mixed into a crowd of around

100 participants! After registration, the day began in a relaxing style as students visited information stalls belonging to some education-related organisations such as **Connect**, **Second Strike**, **VISTA**, **YACVic** and **Parents Victoria**.

It didn't take long before the serious discussions started, with the first main session for Congress beginning with us discussing our vision for a perfect school. From these visions, we created workshop groups to discuss the issues in greater detail, which would form the basis of the work of



the 2011/2012 Executive. After lunch we had the opportunity to meet the Minister for Education, Hon. Martin Dixon and put him to the test during our own question time. We were also pleased to have Minister Dixon present our **SRC Recognition Awards**

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to the winning schools (see page 4 for a list of winners). The day concluded with a fantastic round of mini games between the colour groups whilst, in the background, preparations for an important second day were carried out.

This year was not only the beginning of a three-day program for Congress, but also a brand-new coloured card model of running Congress sessions. After a good breakfast, we spent our time industriously in workshop groups, discussing different important issues affecting us, and suggesting solutions that could be implemented. The proposals that were created were then debated, voted on and will be implemented by the new Executive team.

The new Congress process worked extremely well, with the help of crew members and past Executive members who returned to take part. In the end, a total of 11 resolutions were passed (see page 3 opposite). After all that concentration and diligent work, everyone was rewarded with a 'rip-roaring' trivia night, where fun and laughter filled the room and general knowledge was put to the test.

The final day of Congress was one of tears of joy and happy moments, particularly for the departing 2010/2011 Executive members. We had the pleasure of spending an hour with **Project RockIt** who kick-started the day and inspired many students with their anti-bullying message. This was followed by elections for a new VicSRC Student Executive team for 2011/2012 and a few more games and fun activities. As early afternoon approached, students departed Congress with more than ideas and new contacts: they left with enthusiasm for upholding



the VicSRC's vision and for the importance of listening to student voice.

A personal thank you to all who were part of Congress 2011.

Shaf Shariff



Resolutions Passed at the 2011 Congress

The following resolutions were agreed by the formal sessions of Congress and will, in this priority order, become the business of the new Executive in 2011-2012:

Teacher-Student Relationship

That the VicSRC create a resource to strengthen interaction and relationships between students and teachers.

Parent Education

That the Government provide some sort of resource for schools to help better educate parents about the Victorian schooling system. This resource could include funding, professional facilitators and/or kits.

School Councils

That the VicSRC place high priority on student representation within School Councils and advocate for a student vote.

National Curriculum

That the VicSRC investigate the current and future National Curriculum and its effects on students' satisfaction.

Training Course on Learning

That the VicSRC establish a 'teach the teacher' training course for individual SRCs to enact at their schools around the way students learn.

Electronic Textbooks

That the VicSRC investigate the logistics of adapting textbooks and educational resources into an electronic format and that the results of this investigation be presented to the State Government.

Teacher Selection Panels

That the VicSRC encourage schools to include student opinion and voice on teacher selection panels.



Environmental Case Studies

That the VicSRC promote the idea of being environmentally friendly, through the publication of case studies of active/successful SRCs in this area.

SRC Constitutions

That the VicSRC strongly encourage schools to utilise the resources available in *Represent!* to create their own constitutions.

Environment Resource Kit

That the VicSRC update the *Environment Resource Kit* in order to have up-to-date information to promote environment action within schools.

Laptops

That the VicSRC support access to laptops in schools from Years 9-12 for every student.

Are you or your SRC interested to work on any of these resolutions? If so, contact Kate Walsh, VicSRC Coordinator (coordinator@vicsrc.org.au). It would be awesome to have some 'satellite' groups of students working on specific issues with the Executive.

strengthening SRCs ...

SRC Recognition Awards, 2011

In each of the past two years, the VicSRC has organised a series of statewide awards for Student Councils. See the VicSRC website for more details: www.vicsrc.org.au

In 2011, these Awards were presented to the winners at the VicSRC Congress by the Minister for Education, Hon Martin Dixon:

Connect Award for 'Integration'

- 1: Bendigo Senior Secondary College
- 2: Nossal High School

Second Strike Award for 'Enterprise'

Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School

VASSP Award for 'Informed Representation'

- 1: Balwyn High School
- 2: Heatherwood School

VISTA Award for 'Outstanding Teacher Adviser'

- 1: Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School
- 2: Hopetoun Secondary College



For all your up-to-date information, check the news and resources available on the VicSRC website:

www.vicsrc.org.au



... representing secondary students

The VicSRC has been involved in several consultations and audits in the education sector during 2011. It's great that the opinions of students are being sought on a range of educational issues that especially

affect young people throughout their schooling. So often the opinions of students are not considered in such policy and program formation – which is surprising considering that students are the people who are often **most**

affected by new policies and changes in schools. The VicSRC applauds the organisations and policy makers who make an effort to speak with students and continue to encourage a mutual sharing of ideas.

Speaking Out About Maths and Science

Consultation with the Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Recently, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) consulted with six members of the VicSRC Student Executive around Science and Mathematics participation rates and initiatives in Victorian schools. Students discussed issues ranging from the quality of Mathematics and Science curriculum in schools, to the image of Mathematics and Science among students. The consultation was very informative and we were pleased to receive this positive feedback from VAGO:

"I have often consulted with students through the VicSRC and am always very impressed with their input to a wide range of policy issues. The students always come well prepared to discuss the topic, and demonstrate knowledge of the issues at the standard expected of more experienced stakeholders. They can offer insights that are often missed when the young person's voice is not heard."

"The discussion on Mathematics and Science education was both enjoyable and illuminating. I was impressed with the range of issues the students identified, as well as their depth of understanding on the different variables which can affect student participation rates and the quality of learning. The group presented the views of their wider student body in an engaging, professional and inclusive way."

"I wish to thank the students for their participation and look forward to working with you in the future."

"It's so great to see the voice of students being valued in this way!"

We would like to thank the VAGO and look forward to seeing the ideas that we presented come into future policy.

Kate Walsh and Samantha McClelland

The Schooling Workforce

Submission by the Victorian Student Representative Council to the Productivity Commission

The Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) met with Productivity Commissioner Alison McClelland to discuss their Inquiry into the Schooling Workforce. The VicSRC talked with the Commission about student-teacher relationships and other matters (see below). Since that opportunity, students at the VicSRC Congress initiated discussion on several issues within the terms of reference of the Inquiry and passed some resolutions relevant to it. The VicSRC has now made a formal submission to the Inquiry including these resolutions, as well as other ideas and input from across the three day Congress and from the discussions held with Commissioner McClelland. The submission addresses three areas: **student expectations of teachers and the student teacher relationship; relationships between parents and teachers; and student relationships with school principals.**

The full text of this submission is included in the current (October 2011) issue of **Connect** magazine, which will be sent to all VicSRC members.



Outgoing VicSRC Executive with the Minister

strengthening SRCs ...

Don't Wait for 2012!

Get your SRC ready now

It might almost be the end of the school year, but it's not time to relax yet! Now is the time to select your SRC representatives for 2012 to ensure a quick and efficient transition into next year.

An easy way to avoid the delay often experienced in Term 1 is to hold your elections and begin planning next year's objectives and portfolios now. Additional resources are available in the VicSRC Resource Kit *Represent!* – see <http://www.vicsrc.org.au> – to help ensure that your school has student voices heard from day one.


Here (on the right) are some ideas about steps your SRC could take now or early next year.

Samantha McClelland




Is your SRC ready?

This is a checklist of some of the steps your SRC should be taking **NOW** so that you are organised to be active partners in your school from Day 1, 2012:


 The new SRC Executive (or the previous Executive) meets to plan the SRC's start - elections and first meetings.


 Hold elections for all SRC positions.

 First SRC meeting: establish purposes of the SRC; plan **three major objectives** for the year; allocate responsibilities within the SRC (eg portfolios).

 Organise an **SRC Planning Conference** (have an overnight camp if possible; at least have an extended meeting).

In your SRC Conference, run some 'getting to know you' and team building activities, set goals for next year, develop your SRC action plan and calendar, work out **how** you'll work, develop any training needed.

 **Advertise meetings:** Make sure that everyone knows about the first SRC meeting: use the school bulletin, noticeboards, the school website, e-mail lists etc.

 **Activity:** Organise your first public SRC activity so that all students know about the SRC and its work; involve other students to help run this activity.



... representing secondary students



What is the VicSRC?

The VicSRC (Victorian Student Representative Council) consists of students from across Victoria who have set up a democratic network of SRCs. We are working to strengthen the capacity of all SRCs to speak and take action on behalf of secondary students. The VicSRC is a membership-based organisation, entirely student owned and run, and supported by many organisations and individuals. Its work is funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

New VicSRC members

The following Student Councils have recently become members of the VicSRC. Welcome to:

Blackburn High School
Orbost Secondary College
Maffra Secondary College

Are you a member of the VicSRC?

This newsletter – the *VicSRC Student Advocate* – is sent to all secondary schools in Victoria. You are not necessarily a member of the VicSRC just because you receive this. Financial members of the VicSRC also receive copies of *Connect* six times a year; the next issue (#191 – October 2011) will arrive in schools shortly.

Memberships Due!

VicSRC memberships are due either in March or September each year. **If your membership has just expired, you will receive an e-mail reminder soon ... and also a reminder will be with the next issue of *Connect*.** Please renew promptly to maintain all your membership benefits!

Not a member? Become one NOW!

There are many benefits for SRCs that are VicSRC members. Details and membership forms are on the VicSRC website:

www.vicsrc.org.au

PROJECT ROCKIT presented at the VicSRC Congress 2011

WHAT IS PROJECT ROCKIT?

The PROJECT ROCKIT facilitators are insightful and wise beyond their years. With wonderful humour and brave honesty, within minutes they managed to engage and connect with every student. The PROJECT ROCKIT presentations also give staff and parents some great starting points to continue some very important conversations. Tanya Davies - Year 7 Cluster Leader - Wesley College, St Kilda Road Campus.

PROJECT ROCKIT is a dynamic anti-bullying and leadership initiative, offering programs tackling a range of issues:

Leadership, Bullying & Cyberbullying, Team building, Communication skills, Values & Vision, Positive body image.

PROJECT ROCKIT sessions are designed to represent a 'show me don't tell me' approach to learning. Using an array of dramatic role-plays, group activities, student performances, creative writing and real-life stories, P-ROCK embodies key messages and strategies that empower young people to achieve change.

This has helped P-ROCK develop a reputation as student favourite, with 96% of students reporting that they found the program personally helpful.

In evaluation, 96% of students reported that they found PROJECT ROCKIT personally helpful.

www.projectrockit.com.au

info@projectrockit.com.au

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Meet the New VicSRC Executive: 2011-2012



The following students were elected to the **VicSRC Executive** for 2011-2012 at the VicSRC Congress 2011:

- Row 1:** Denara Amat (Year 11, Melbourne Girls College)
 Rachel Cerar (Year 9, Braybrook College)
 Sammy Chapman (Year 8, Casey Grammar)
 Tiffany Chapman (Year 10, Toorak College)
- Row 2:** Tim Eric (Year 11, Frankston High School)
 Marlee-Alice Gorman (Year 9, Princes Hill Secondary)
 Lachlan Hugo (Year 10, Blackburn High School)
 Justine Jaramillo (Year 11, Narre Warren South P-12)
- Row 3:** Jake Kearns (Year 7, Maffra Secondary College)
 Sean Law (Year 10, Sunbury College)
 Alexis Leonhardt (Year 8, Bundoora Secondary College)
 Samantha McClelland (Year 11, Balwyn High School)
- Row 4:** Ellie Patterson (Year 10, Melbourne Girls College)
 Olivia Pearce (Year 8, Maffra Secondary College)
 Edison Ponari (Year 10, Bundoora Secondary College)
 Sufi Salieh (Year 9, Melbourne Girls College)



Students voting for the VicSRC Executive 2011-2012

Contact us:

The **VicSRC** is supported by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It is auspiced by and 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

For more information:

Check the **VicSRC** website for membership details and forms:

www.vicsrc.org.au

This issue of the *VicSRC Student Advocate* was edited by *Samantha McClelland* and *Marlee-Alice Gorman*

Ryan Bradley Gunn 27.06.1993 - 07.09.2011

Unfortunately the VicSRC family has lost a member this month, with the sad passing of Ryan Gunn at the age of only 18 years. Ryan attended the 2009 VicSRC Congress as a Year 10 representative from Lowanna College, and was elected to the 2009/2010 VicSRC



Executive. He was well known for his passion for students, his friendly smile and the way he could quickly make anyone laugh. A couple of months into his term on the Executive, Ryan was forced to give up his position as he was diagnosed with Leukaemia. Ryan battled for two years against this awful disease but lost his brave fight on September 9th 2011, in his

mother's arms at Peter McCallum Cancer Centre.

Ryan was an inspiration to so many, as he kept up his optimistic outlook throughout his battle, always one to make a witty comment or give advice. Ryan's journey was tragically cut short, but he will live on in our hearts for many years to come. Anyone who would like to contribute to finding a cure for this debilitating disease can send donations to the Leukaemia Foundation:

<http://www.leukaemia.org.au/>

Rest in Peace Ryan ... we'll miss you ... xx

Georgia Kennelly