

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



VicSRC

BRINGING THE VICSRC STRATEGIC PLAN TO LIFE

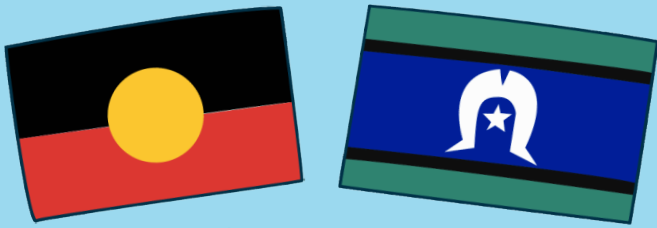
How 2025 laid the foundations for 2025-2029



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY



VicSRC acknowledges that our work takes place on Aboriginal lands never ceded, and that our office sits on the Wurundjeri lands of the Kulin Nation. We recognise and pay respects to all Aboriginal peoples as the custodians of this beautiful country on which we learn, play and grow.

Education is the act of imparting knowledge, and we want to honour First Nations peoples' rich and ancient practices of knowledge-sharing and the inextricable link between storytelling, people, and Country.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal lands.

Vic SRC

Victorian Student
Representative Council

Wurundjeri Country
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VIC 3051
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info@vicsrc.org.au

JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

This year marks a defining step forward for VicSRC. With a new Strategic Plan in place and new Board leadership, we have focused on strengthening our foundations and accelerating student-led impact across Victoria. We are pleased to share this message together, Simone Gianelli commencing as Board Chair in mid-2025, as the organisation enters its next phase of strategic maturity.

Our new Strategic Plan was developed to meet a changing environment, one where student voice must be more than symbolic. Students are calling for genuine influence, broader access, and strong representation. The plan sets a clear direction: build student leadership capability, expand who gets to participate, and embed student voice more deeply in decision making spaces.

This year has been about bringing this strategy to life. In practice, this meant equipping students with stronger advocacy tools, expanding leadership pathways, and redesigning key programs to increase reach and inclusion. We prioritised student agency at every level, students shaping agendas, leading conversations, and influencing outcomes, not simply attending forums.

We are already seeing early signs of impact and culture shift. Student leaders are stepping into their roles with greater confidence and clarity. Partners are engaging

students earlier and more meaningfully. Our 2026 Executive Committee is the most diverse in VicSRC history, following an outstanding campaign and election period that broadened participation and representation.

We also began celebrating the 20th anniversary of Congress, a milestone that honours two decades of student-led democratic practice. This anniversary is being matched with innovation: for the first time, Congress is touring across four regional locations: Gippsland, Wangaratta, Swan Hill and Geelong, extending access and recognising that student leadership happens everywhere.

Across the organisation the shift is clear, from activity to impact, from consultation to co-creation, from participation to leadership.

We thank our student representatives, members, partners and supporters for helping drive this progress. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive future for student voice, led by students, and shaped with purpose.

Simone Gianelli (she/her), Board Chair

Julia Baron (she/her), Chief Executive Officer

OUR STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Our 2025-2029 Strategic Plan drives student-led change in education across Victoria. Built on three pillars:

- **Enabling Student Empowerment,**
- **Driving Systems Change, and**
- **Community Partnerships.**

It focuses on deepening student agency, expanding access to leadership and advocacy opportunity for all students, and embedding student voice in decision making.



Priority areas include leadership development, advocacy and policy influence, building community connections, and fostering inclusive, diverse representation.



Success means students confidently shape policy and practice, supported by strong partnerships and equitable opportunities.

This strategy serves students first and foremost, alongside educators, schools, and communities committed to advancing authentic, student-led transformation.

ENABLING STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

RURAL AMBASSADORS CLUSTER

THE PURPOSE

Our first goal from our 2025-2029 Strategic Plan is to equip students with the tools, confidence, and opportunities to advocate for their education needs and priorities.

- **Why it matters:** Students understand their schools best.
- **The change:** Moving from student participation to student-led action.
- **How:** Practice skills, partnerships, and meaningful pathways.

THE STORY

In November, 65 students gathered at Marian College Myrtleford for an Ambassadors cluster event, representing 5 schools from Victoria's Hume and Alpine regions. Delivered in partnership with the Country Education Partnership (CEP), the event was the third Ambassadors offering of the year.

Throughout the day, students developed proposals addressing key issues in their school communities. They built practical skills in networking, power-mapping, and

action planning – tools that will help them create effective change in their local school communities. Rural Youth Ambassadors from CEP supported facilitation, helping create a space where students felt confident to contribute and lead.

The collaborative format sparked connection across schools. Many students were surprised by how similar their challenges were and energised by the opportunity to tackle them together. What stood out was not just participation, but agency. Students left with concrete plans, peer networks, and the confidence to take their ideas forward.

THE OUTCOME

82

primary and secondary students engaged in the 2025 Ambassadors program across rural, regional, and metropolitan Victoria

OVER

90%

of participants reported increased understanding of student voice, advocacy, and leadership

4

students progressed to internships with VicSRC and 2 Ambassadors were appointed to our 2026 Student Executive Advisory Committee.



LOOKING AHEAD

Ambassadors will remain a key way we connect with and support students across Victoria in 2026. We are continuing to explore flexible delivery formats with partners to ensure accessibility for rural, regional, and metropolitan communities alike.

The program's success reinforces the value of equipping students with practical advocacy skills, not just inviting their input. As we strengthen partnerships and create clearer pathways into ongoing leadership roles, Ambassadors will continue to serve as both an entry point and a launchpad for long-term student influence across Victoria's education system.

AMBASSADORS INTERNSHIP

In 2025, 4 Ambassadors participants completed internships with VicSRC, receiving ongoing support to progress their project proposals. Two of our interns from the Monash program, Shriya (she/her) and Shivika (she/her) are currently in year 11 and have been kind enough to share their experience with us.

“Earlier this year, we were lucky enough to be involved in VicSRC Ambassadors, a program that empowers students across Victoria to strengthen student voice and create meaningful change in education. Through the program, we connected with students from different schools and backgrounds, and quickly realised that many of the challenges we face, whether it’s mental health, subject selection, or planning for the future, are shared by others across the state. It was great to know that we weren’t alone.

As Ambassadors, we built our skills in public speaking, teamwork, and advocacy, and gained confidence in sharing our ideas with school leaders and decision-makers.

We learned that real change doesn’t just come from having a good idea, but from collaborating, listening, and being willing to step outside your comfort zone.

Through the VicSRC internship, we developed a student-led ‘bootcamp’ style event designed to support middle and senior school students as they think about their future pathways. The event includes subject expos, Q&A panels, and opportunities to connect with teachers, alumni, and industry professionals.

We are currently organising this event for March and have invited a range of professionals and past students to speak with our year level, helping everyone feel a little less pressure and more confident about what’s ahead.”

We know that students are eager for opportunities that extend beyond a single event. We will continue to offer internships through the Ambassadors program in 2026, meeting a clear need for long-term guidance and mentorship. These internships are rare opportunities for students to be supported to realise the change they want to see on their own terms.





PARTNER SCHOOLS



THE PURPOSE

Our Strategic Plan commits us to strengthening the conditions that enable authentic student voice in every school.

- **Why it matters:** Schools want student voice to be meaningful, not symbolic.
- **The change:** Moving from intention to embedded practice.
- **How:** Practical frameworks, peer learning, and expert guidance.

THE STORY

This year, we strengthened our Partner Schools work to help educators embed student voice into everyday school practice. Across Victoria, schools told us they were committed to student voice but needed clearer frameworks, real examples and practical tools to sustain their efforts.

In response, our Partner Schools network became a hub for shared learning and practical implementation. Through four termly Communities of Practice, educators came together to exchange strategies, reflect on challenges and test new ideas in real

time. These sessions weren't theoretical, they shaped action in classrooms and staffrooms.

Insights from site visits and community discussions directly informed the creation of four new practical tools, including resources focused on decision-making pathways, consultation processes and student-led project planning. Rather than isolated initiatives, schools began strengthening the systems that allow students to genuinely influence their learning environment.

The shift was clear: educators moved from asking "How do we start?" to confidently refining and scaling their practice.

THE OUTCOME

22

site visits across government, Catholic, independent, regional and alternative settings informed program design, resources and advocacy priorities.

89%

of the 33 educators engaged in the Partner Schools Communities of Practice reporting increased knowledge and confidence embedding student voice across teaching, behaviour and whole school practice.

4

ready-to-use resources developed, supporting Student Representative Team planning, power mapping for student-led change, and responsive teaching practice.



LOOKING AHEAD

Demand for structured, expert support in student voice practice is accelerating. Schools are seeking classroom ready strategies, practical tools and opportunities to learn alongside peers.

In response, we are expanding the Partner Schools model, deepening our specialist guidance and strengthening the overall partner journey. Next year will focus on scaling this approach while maintaining quality and relational depth.

As we strengthen our role as a trusted advisor to schools, our goal remains clear: to ensure student voice is embedded confidently, sustainably, and systemically across Victorian education settings.



DRIVING SYSTEMS CHANGE

INDEPENDENT REVIEWS AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES

THE PURPOSE

System reform requires the voices of those most affected. Through independent inquiries, public submissions and collective advocacy, student lived experience is translated into structured, evidence-informed recommendations that influence curriculum, assessment, funding and governance decisions across Victoria's education system.

THE STORY

Major system reviews in 2025 presented critical opportunities for student influence. These included the [Anti-Bullying Rapid Review](#) and the [Inquiry into student pathways to in-demand industries](#). Additionally, the [Independent Review of the VCAA](#) and the [Inquiry into Public School Funding](#) invited submissions on issues central to students' educational experience.

Drawing on Congress insights, advisory panel discussions and statewide consultations, student perspectives were consolidated into detailed submissions and an Open Letter signed by young people across year levels. Students called for a permanent student

voice mechanism within VCAA governance, reform of high-stakes examination models, improved communication during periods of disruption, and full funding to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard. They articulated the lived impact of underfunding, teacher shortages, cancelled classes, ageing infrastructure and reduced wellbeing supports.

Across these contributions, a clear message emerged: students do not want to be consulted after decisions are made — they want to be included from the beginning.

Collective advocacy ensured that lived experience was positioned as credible, structured policy input.

THE OUTCOME

4

formal submissions lodged into major independent inquiries, amplifying student informed recommendations

OVER 100

students across year levels signed a statewide Open Letter, demonstrating collective student advocacy

WHY THIS PRIORITY MATTERS

Curriculum structures, assessment models and funding decisions shape students' daily experiences in profound ways. Yet formal review processes can often feel distant from the classroom.

Embedding student perspectives within these processes strengthens legitimacy, improves policy design and ensures reforms respond to real educational realities rather than abstract assumptions.



LOOKING AHEAD

Sustained influence requires follow-through. In 2026, focus will shift toward monitoring reform implementation, expanding student consultation mechanisms and strengthening

research partnerships to support evidence-informed advocacy. Ensuring that recommendations translate into tangible system change remains the priority. Moving from review to reform, student voice must continue to be embedded at every stage of decision-making.

TEACH THE TEACHER

THE PURPOSE

Our Strategic Plan prioritises positioning students as partners in shaping school culture, policy and practice.

- **Why it matters:** Student voice drives stronger wellbeing and learning outcomes.
- **The change:** Moving from consultation to partnership.
- **How:** Equipping students to influence professional learning and whole-school priorities.

THE STORY

In 2025, we delivered our Teach the Teacher program for 12 Victorian schools, including Newlands Primary School in Melbourne's inner north. At Newlands, student voice drives real change. Through a revitalised Student Representative Council (SRC) and a dynamic Community Inquiry program, teacher Nerida Jolley (she/her) supports students to lead improvements to student wellbeing and outcomes.

Newlands' decision to participate in Teach the Teacher was part of this systemic approach to student voice. Designed to complement existing initiatives, the program supported students to gather whole-school data, identify the issues most important to their peers, and design a powerful professional learning session for staff focused on student engagement and First Nations learning.

The program positioned students as partners in shaping school culture, policy, and priorities, reinforcing an already thriving culture of student voice.

As Nerida reflected,

“[The] program has been a really powerful way to demonstrate to all staff that we have a new culture of more meaningful and consistent student empowerment.”

THE OUTCOME

ALL

participating schools remain actively connected to VicSRC through our Partner Schools network, with every student team initiating action plans to address issues identified by their peers and ensure impact beyond the life of the program.

82%

of students increased their confidence to implement student voice initiatives, while 89% of students reported a stronger understanding of student voice and 87% reported improved leadership skills.

100%

of teachers reported ongoing benefits, agreeing the program positively influenced school culture, collaboration, and student voice practice.



LOOKING AHEAD

We're excited to build on this momentum from 2025, drawing on key learnings to ensure positive engagement for the 6 schools participating across semester 1.

We're equally committed to sustaining connections with our 2025 cohort through Partner Schools – a priority initiative we're strengthening in 2026 to deepen our impact and further embed meaningful student voice practice.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

COUNTRY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

THE PURPOSE

Through the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, we are committed to strengthening representation so students from every community can influence education decisions.

- **Why it matters:** Rural voices are often underrepresented in statewide advocacy.
- **The change:** From participation to rural leadership influence.
- **How:** Deep partnerships, joint delivery and shared advocacy platforms.

THE STORY

In 2025, our relationship with Country Education Partnership (CEP) deepened through joint delivery, shared learning and a collective commitment to elevating rural student voice.

Together, we supported CEP's Rural Youth Ambassadors with advocacy training and consultation sessions reviewing VicSRC's Advocacy Platform, ensuring rural and regional perspectives informed statewide priorities. We co-delivered the Ambassadors program in Myrtleford, engaging five schools

and 65 students, partnered to deliver Teach the Teacher to three small schools in western Victoria, and contributed to CEP's Small Schools Forum.

Importantly, connections between VicSRC's Student Executive Committee and CEP's Rural Youth Ambassadors also strengthened direct pathways for rural students to engage with government decision makers.

Across every initiative, the partnership demonstrated what is possible when rural expertise and statewide platforms align, ensuring students from rural and regional communities are not just consulted, but positioned as leaders influencing the system.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026 we will build on this strong foundation by expanding joint initiatives and increasing rural leadership opportunities. A priority will be strengthening structured pathways for rural students to contribute to statewide policy conversations.

As we continue to grow our relationship, our shared focus remains clear: Geography should not determine influence. Together, we will deepen this partnership so students in rural and regional communities have sustained, meaningful opportunities to lead and shape the future of their education.





THE PURPOSE

Strengthening student voice requires partnerships beyond schools, including universities, researchers, and system leaders. This matters because community stakeholders shape policy, research and innovation. Partnering with institutions like Monash University to embed student voice in research and practice enables us to move from consultation to cross-sector student voice and co-design.

THE STORY

2025 marked the beginning of a new collaboration with Monash University focused on strengthening the role of student voice across research and education initiatives.

Together with the Monash Action Lab, we facilitated student consultations to inform the development of Making the Link, a digital mental health product. Students directly shaped its design, ensuring the platform reflected real needs and lived experience.

We also delivered a co-design and student voice training workshop for faculty members from the School of Education and Psychology,

strengthening staff capability to partner meaningfully with students in research and practice. The partnership extended to Melbourne Congress, where Monash supported and contributed to teacher professional learning sessions.



THE OUTCOME

5

students engaged across 4 consultations informing development of the Making the Link digital mental health initiative

20

faculty members from the School of Education participated in co-design and student voice training

100%

of the Congress Teacher Professional Development attendees felt empowered to improve student voice practice in their school communities.



LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026 we will continue building this partnership by supporting faculty to strengthen student engagement approaches and expanding collaboration across research and program development, ensuring future initiatives are shaped with students as partners.

CROSS CUTTING ENABLERS

STRATEGY BEHIND THE SCENES

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP FOR IMPACT

As co-chairs of VicSRC's 2025 Student Executive Advisory Committee, we are proud to reflect on a year of significant progress in strengthening the foundation for meaningful student leadership and impact.

In 2025, we celebrated the 20th annual VicSRC Congress, a key event where students from across Victoria come together to share their experiences, raise concerns, and propose solutions. This milestone highlights two decades of growing student influence in education. Looking forward, we are committed to expanding access by hosting regional Congress events, ensuring students from all areas, urban and rural, can participate and have their voices heard.

A major achievement was launching our new five-year Strategic Plan 2025-2029, which sets clear priorities to deepen student empowerment, advance systemic change, and strengthen community partnerships. This plan provides a roadmap for sustainable and impactful advocacy. Alongside this, continued implementation of recommendations from a comprehensive Role Review of the Executive Committee clarified and enhanced the responsibilities of the Executive Committee, helping student leaders contribute more effectively.

Advocacy remains central to VicSRC's work. Notably, the Open Letter to the VCAA signed by 102 students urged the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to prioritise student perspectives in its review process. This, and our ongoing engagement with the Department of Education, demonstrate our commitment to elevating student voices in education policy.

We wish to thank outgoing Board Chair Howard for his five years of supportive leadership, and warmly welcome Simone as the new Chair. Our gratitude extends to VicSRC's staff and Board for their steadfast support, enabling students to lead with confidence.

Finally, we express our deep appreciation to all Victorian students who engaged with us this year. Your voices are the driving force behind meaningful education reform. We also celebrate the passion and dedication of the 2025 Executive Committee members and wish them well as they continue their education journeys. To the incoming Executive, we encourage you to keep embedding student voice into every part of VicSRC, and to boldly shape an education system that truly supports students.

**Kevin Ch'ng (he/him) and
Lumina Rotar (she/her)**
2025 Executive Committee Co-Chairs

2026 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS



ARIAN (he/him)

AYSON (he/him)

CRYSTAL (she/her)

DANIEL (he/him)

EDWARD (he/him)

ELISHA (she/her)

EVA (she/her)

IMOGEN (she/they)

JAMES (he/him)

LAWRENCE (he/him)

MAVIS (she/her)

NETHARA (she/her)

SARAH (she/her)

TAHA (she/her)

TARA (she/her)

2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS



ANNIE (she/her)

AYSON (he/him)

ELISHA (she/her)

ELSIE (she/her)

FATIMA (she/her)

GRETA (she/her)

IMOGEN (she/they)

IVY (she/her)

KEVIN (he/him)

LUMINA (she/her)

OLIVIA (she/her)

OSKAR (he/him)

RADHA (she/her)

RISITH (he/him)

TILLY (she/her)

CURRENT BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS



SIMONE GIANELLI
(she/her), Chair



TIM WARWICK
(he/him), Treasurer



GRACE MCCOY
(she/her)



BRAD BOWDEN
(he/him)



SARAH MCNICOL
(she/her)



JAMES HOLLAND
(he/him)

FORMER BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS



HOWARD CHOO
(he/him), former Chair

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND CAPABILITY

This year, VicSRC's team grew stronger and more connected, fuelled by a shared passion for student-led change. Everyone brought their skills, energy, and fresh ideas to the table, creating a culture where diverse voices are heard and valued. We're grateful for the

creativity, dedication, and teamwork that make everything we do possible. Thanks to all staff for showing up, stepping up, and making VicSRC a place where people thrive and students lead the way. Together, we're shaping the future, one step at a time.



JULIA BARON
(she/her), CEO



IAN JOHNSON
(he/him), Finance Manager



GEORGIA CUTAJAR
(she/her), Executive Officer



JAKE FEHILY
(he/him), Programs Manager



NAT PAFFARD
(she/her), Programs Officer



TASH KATU
(she/her), Policy and Advocacy Manager



RIYA RAJESH
(she/her), Policy and Research Officer



CHELSEA DANIEL
(she/they), Communications
and Memberships Officer

EMBEDDING CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Over the last 12 months, VicSRC has undertaken significant review and updates to our Child Safety policies and practices in an effort to ensure that we remain up-to-date with best practice for the youth and education sector. This review process has intentionally featured in-depth consultation and guidance from students who engage with VicSRC in a variety of ways to ensure that our practices are fit for purpose and empowering to our young people.

VicSRC's unique structure, which embeds authentic student leadership into our governance and operational practices means that it is absolutely crucial for us to get our

Child Safety approach right. Finding a balance between empowerment of our young people to make hard decisions and our duty to keep them safe can be challenging, but it is integral to our mission, so time and care has been afforded to the entire process.

VicSRC takes its responsibility to children and young people seriously, and commits to upholding the Child Safe Standards according to best practice. The continual review and updating of our policies, procedures and practices demonstrates our ongoing commitment to fostering a safe environment where young people are protected and empowered.





2025

FINANCIAL REPORT

2025 was a year of consolidation and strategic investment for VicSRC. For the year ended 31 December 2025, the organisation recorded a deficit of \$76,827 against total income of \$831,521. Despite shifts in internal conditions which limited capacity to raise additional income, which resulted in this shortfall, the organisation maintained its deliberate investment in the capabilities, systems, and partnerships needed to deliver on our new Strategic Plan.

Revenue from government grants remained our largest income stream at \$724,960, complemented by strong growth in sponsorships. Expenditure was predominantly staffing (\$727,902), reflecting our commitment to resourcing the people who make student voice work possible.

VicSRC enters 2026 with accumulated funds of \$218,939, maintaining a sound equity position that supports continued growth without undue financial risk.

Tim Warwick (he/him), Treasurer



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



Statement of profit or loss for the year ended 31 December 2025

	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
INCOME		
Revenue	827,397	953,265
Interest Received	4,124	5,278
Total Income	831,521	958,543
EXPENDITURE		
Employee benefit expenses	(727,902)	(802,941)
Accommodation expenses	(46,788)	(45,633)
Administrative expenses	(69,833)	(53,506)
Communication expenses	(19,676)	(9,110)
Depreciation	(3,830)	(4,824)
Project costs	(40,319)	(43,894)
Total expenditure	(908,348)	(959,908)
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year	(76,827)	(1,365)
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Net surplus/(deficit) attributable to the association	(76,827)	(1,365)

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2025

	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	346,661	47,590
Accounts and other receivables	3,974	290,026
Other assets	13,868	18,845
Total current assets	364,503	356,461
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Investments in term deposits	42,611	40,874
Property, plant and equipment	2,231	6,061
Total non-current assets	44,842	46,935
Total assets	409,345	403,396
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts and other payables	95,056	62,440
Employee benefits	39,370	42,653
Income received in advance	53,113	-
Total current liabilities	187,539	105,093
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Employee benefits	2,867	2,537
Total non-current liabilities	2,867	2,537
Total liabilities	190,406	107,630
Net assets	218,939	295,766
EQUITY		
Accumulated funds	218,939	295,766
Total equity	218,939	295,766

FROM YEAR ONE TO THE LONG VIEW



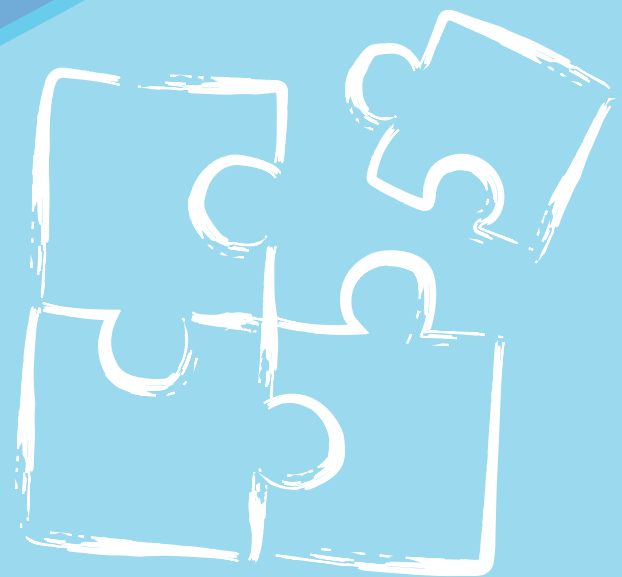
STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS

2025 marked the critical first year of delivering our 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. Rather than introducing new activity, our focus was on alignment, ensuring programs, partnerships and advocacy were clearly connected to our long-term priorities. This required strengthening foundations, clarifying roles, and embedding consistent practice across governance and operations.

We prioritised depth over expansion, refining existing programs such as Ambassadors, Partner Schools, and Teach the Teacher, to increase impact and accessibility. Partnerships were strengthened with clearer shared purpose and measurable outcomes. Importantly, we invested in systems, capability and structures that position student voice to grow sustainably over time.

Early indicators show increased student participation, stronger regional engagement, and deeper integration of student perspectives into policy conversations.

These results reflect progress, not completion. In this foundational year of the Strategic Plan, we concentrated on creating strong systems, clear alignment and momentum for lasting impact.



WHAT COMES NEXT

In the year ahead, our focus turns to scaling impact while maintaining quality and authenticity. The Victorian State Election presents a critical opportunity to centre student priorities in public debate and policy commitments. We will mobilise students to shape our election platform, engage directly with decision makers, and advocate for system reforms grounded in lived experience.

We will also deliver our first ever Regional Congress, expanding access to democratic student leadership across multiple regional locations. This milestone strengthens participation beyond metropolitan settings and reflects our commitment to equitable representation.

Alongside these priorities, we will deepen our partnerships, expand structured pathways for student leadership, and strengthen support for schools embedding student voice in practice.

2026 will be about visibility, influence and reach, ensuring student leadership is embedded not just within VicSRC, but across Victoria's education system.

VicSRC

Mental Health
and Wellbeing
congress

