



Parents voting in our School Council Elections



Dear staff, parents and carers,

It's hard to believe that we are already at the end of Term 1 in 2024 – the year has gone quickly by as we have settled into our classes across the State. We have enrolled almost 17,000 students in our centre classes, with an additional (approx.) 1,800 students accessing their language of choice via Distance. Of course, this is an enormous undertaking every year, and I thank all our staff for their dedication and support of the school to ensure that we can provide the best opportunities for our students.

The challenge for us as an organisation remains to resourcing within our available budget. This means that we must carefully monitor our classes across the 42 centres to enable us to maximise access for all students alongside our commitment to low-candidature languages and provision in rural and remote areas. We will always strive to provide access to languages, however, the demand in some areas is beyond our resourcing capability. We thank you for your understanding in this matter.

We extend our congratulations to our 2023 VCE students, who again achieved outstanding results. A total of 149 students who studied a Year 12 language received a score of 40+, with four students receiving a perfect study score of 50 in Persian, Polish, Japanese (Second Language) and Italian.

Following our recent election for parent positions on our School Council, I'm pleased to advise that the following parents were elected: Savitha Krishnappa, Ajay Shiv Sharma, Raja Sekhar Ravi

I take the opportunity to thank all our candidates who were willing to support the school through their nominations and look forward to a successful year ahead with the 2024 School Council.

In the following pages, you'll see some examples of the fine work already undertaken at our Centres. The joy on the faces of students and teachers is a testament to the great work of our VSL community.

Thank you for your support.



Regards

Judi Benney
Acting Principal

Area Activities

Celebrating Harmony Week at the Melton Centre



Harmony Week is the celebration that recognises our diversity and brings together Australians from all different backgrounds. With language programs in French, Hindi, Punjabi, and Tamil the VSL Melton Centre is a living example of the vibrant multiculturalism which characterises contemporary Australia. The staff and students organised a Harmony Week Concert on Saturday 23rd March 2024 to showcase their cultural knowledge and skills. After a wonderful morning of rhythmical and colourful student performances, teachers and supervisors continued the festivities with a shared Indian lunch.



Felix Siddell
Area Manager West 2 (Melton, Truganina, Caroline Springs)

Exploring Chinese Traditional Costumes at the University High School Centre

During the last lesson of Term 1 in 2024, Mr. Charles introduced the fascinating world of Chinese traditional costumes. Known as Hanfu, these traditional garments carry rich cultural significance and deep philosophical roots. Each ethnic group in China boasts its own unique style of attire, with variations across different dynasties. Following the introduction, Mr. Charles allowed the students to experience firsthand by trying on some traditional costumes. The students were delighted to immerse themselves in this cultural experience, appreciating the intricate beauty and history behind each garment. It was a truly enjoyable activity for all involved.



Mr Charles Xia
Chinese Teacher 5-6, University High School Centre

Celebrating Ziu Martisorului 1-9 at the Dandenong Centre

On the 2nd of March, at VSL Romanian we celebrated a Romanian tradition called Ziu Martisorului (pronounced Zi-wa Mar-ts-i-sh-or-oo-looi.) It is the celebration of the coming of spring in Romania and usually, boys/men give out little badge like gifts called Martisoare, wrapped in white and red string, symbolising love and purity. Mrs. Iacoban's husband made little templates out of wood, and we were given sharpies to draw designs on them. The designs had to be based on the Romanian traditional outfit. Overall, the members of the class and I enjoyed making these and hope to do more fun Romanian related arts and crafts activities.



Annabelle Iacoban
Romanian 1-9, Dandenong

Celebration of Chin Hakha National Day – Tuesday, 20 February



Berwick Chin Hakha teacher, Tin Mualcin, and the Chin Hakha community celebrated Chin Hakha National Day with Berwick VSL Chin Hakha students and members of the local community. This was the first time the Chin Hakha community in the South East was able to celebrate their National Day with the VSL in a formal celebration, which included dancing, singing and short plays. A really wonderful and inspiring celebration.



Pashto 1-10 class at the Dandenong Centre

The pashto class is very pleased to begin a new year's work, with a full class and many students on the waiting list.



Bahanita Danish, Teacher

World Hindi Day – Indian Consulate

In January, we celebrated World Hindi Day at the Consulate General of India in Melbourne.



Together with VSL Hindi teachers, I prepared and participated in a short play promoting Hindi and VSL. There was also a poetry writing competition to celebrate the event.

I was honoured to receive the second prize for my poem from Dr. Sushil Kumar, the Consul General of India in Melbourne.

The pictures below were taken at the World Hindi Day event with Dr. Kumar and the award ceremony.

SBS Hindi and other local social media pages covered the event. It was great success and VSL South East teachers and students received great appreciation for their efforts and participation.

Shally Khanna

Possum Power at the South Oakleigh Centre

South Oakleigh VSL is the largest centre at South 2.

With approximately 560 students and offering 4 languages, Chinese Second Language/First Language, Greek, Russian and Turkish, Saturdays are a noisy and energetic buzz of language learning.

Saturday 23rd March, the last day of term 1 however, proved to be eerily quiet.

The Admin staff had that ominous sinking feeling when their entrance was barred on arrival.

The electric gates would just not budge. They were firmly closed shut and the only way in was through the pedestrian door. "Oh well" they initially thought. "Perhaps the boom gate mechanism was faulty. Parents, carers and staff will just have to park outside the school".

But as they moved through the school entrance the seriousness of the situation began to unfold. There was no lighting, no internet, no interactive white boards and no access to computers, or toilets or the library.

South Oakleigh Secondary College was a pitch-black NO-GO ZONE! Within minutes and after a call to the day school principal and electricity provider the difficult but necessary decision was made to cancel classes! A possum had hungrily chewed through electricity wiring and blacked out over 500 premises, so our South Oakleigh Admin team rallied into action. One group dragged out a notice board to Bakers Road alerting everyone to the situation and another group nipped out a way of emailing 560 centre parents on a little portable laptop hot spotted by a mobile phone!



Initially the implausible, scam like email roused suspicion. Parents, carers, students and teachers rang to verify. But as the reality of the situation was acknowledged, the tide of traffic swung back to Centre Road carrying with it some disgruntled parents but deliriously happy students.

Nonetheless there were some who would not be deterred! Our Chinese FL had a SAC to complete, a number of left-over students had to be minded and an ardent cohort of Greek VCE parents just had to get their VCE Greek books.

Once more the intrepid Admin team lead by the supervisor Mr George Tzimourtas, mobilized. The VCE class completed their task, the students were cared for and a small team of parents and staff ventured into darkness with their mobile phones lights to locate and open the VSL office and find the popular publications.

Although that pesky possum left a costly calling card he will also be remembered and possibly thanked by some.

Let's hope that his next of kin doesn't retaliate in retribution at another VSL centre.

Venetia Kefalianos
Area Manager
South 2 (McKinnon, South Oakleigh, Westall)

Distance Education

Year 11 Immersion Camp

One of the more challenging aspects of distance education is offering students opportunities to work together with their classmates in the same location on the same day. This is something we have been trying to address in recent times at the VSL, by offering more excursions, VCE seminars and webinars each term and, more recently, by developing collaborative tasks to include in our courses.



Indonesian coordinator Michael Boss working with some of his students at the camp



Students and staff enjoying some casual volleyball

In 2024 we have been able to take a further leap forward in this area. On the last Friday of Term One, to link up with Year 11 face-to-face seminars for six of our biggest languages, students were offered the opportunity to attend an overnight camp. At the conclusion of the seminars for French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, camp attendees were guided by staff onto trams to make their way to Urban Camp. We took over the whole facility in Royal Park, just north of the Melbourne CBD, for 24 hours of teamwork and language learning.

This was the first-ever camp offered by VSL Distance Education, and I can say confidently that it was a resounding success. More than 70 of our Year 11 students from across Victoria took part in a range of engaging language learning tasks, activities and games, all prepared and facilitated by seventeen of our dedicated teachers.

A sunny Friday afternoon saw students settling in to their rooms and diving into their language groups for their first camp activity. Students and staff were then grateful for a chance to head outdoors for some leisure time in Royal Park – activities included soccer, volleyball, finnska and bocce among others – and get their bodies moving after an intensive day of learning. A delicious dinner prepared by Chef Winnie was followed by one more language activity, before things got more than a little competitive. Students

formed teams and went head-to-head in a multicultural trivia night – the cheering for which no doubt woke some of the animals just across the park at Melbourne Zoo!

While it was fair to say that more than a few of us were bleary-eyed on Saturday morning, it's equally clear that the first language activity for the day was taken on with enthusiasm. Teachers guided their students through well-being activities in language – from meditation to group problem-solving, and naming emotions to leisure activities, there was something for everyone. During this session, each group also cycled through a brief pilates class, after which more than a few beads of sweat were clear to see!

As it turned out, the final activity might just have been the best. Students were asked to design, write and film a commercial for a cultural product in their language. The result was a collection of incredibly imaginative videos featuring Japanese curry, Spanish coffee, Italian coffee, French chairs, German and Indonesian. The creativity shown by all of the groups just blew the teachers away, and each video earned a warm reception when they were shared after lunch.

We heard some great feedback from students along the way, and at the conclusion of the camp as parents arrived for pick-up, but I think this quote from one of our German students sums it up nicely...

"Thank you so much for taking the time to come on camp with us, it was certainly a highlight of my term. I really enjoyed meeting everyone and seeing you in person and I believe my German has improved a lot. I would really like to do that again sometime."

As does this one from one of our parents:

"Our daughter came home saying it was "one of the best camps ever. "She absolutely loved it - learnt so much and made some lovely connections with her VSL classmates."



Students participating in a teamwork activity on Saturday morning

These connections are exactly what we were hoping for alongside language learning. Students will no doubt maintain these connections throughout their VCE language studies, and they will be an additional motivation for students to join for future seminars.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Camp Coordinator Annette Buchholz, as well as the whole seminar and camp team, for putting together such an engaging program and giving up some of their weekend to give students the chance to come together in this way. And a big shout-out to the team at Urban Camp for providing an amazing venue for our first camp. After such a great first-up experience, here's hoping we have many more immersion camps with more languages in the future!

Mike Atkinson, Acting Manager - Distance Education

VCE High Scorers from 2023

We congratulate all of our 2023 VCE students who completed their VCE language studies. The following students were amongst the high scorers in Victoria in their respective language. In the following pages they reminisce about their experiences during the school year.



Natalia Hordejuk – Polish

I've always been interested in Polish traditions, customs, and history, and VSL helped further my knowledge and interests. I loved seeing my Polish friends weekly. It was fun reconnecting with people from my culture. I also enjoyed learning the history of Poland that I previously didn't know, as it made me feel more connected to my homeland. I was never a confident writer, but my teacher never gave up on me and constantly provided me with practice prompts and feedback. It allows you to talk with your extended family who might only speak your native language and teaches you about your heritage, the history behind it and your culture. Plus, being bilingual sounds cool. It's a good idea to change your Netflix audio and subtitles to your language and watch movies! Immerse yourself in your language, if someone you know already speaks that language, challenge yourself by only speaking that language to them too. In the future, I want to be a doctor, either finishing my studies here or in Poland. Being bilingual would not only help me communicate with Polish people but also with most Slavic people as the languages are very similar. Being able to speak with someone in their native tongue builds trust and comfort between two people, especially doctors and patients.



Jessica Toziewska – Macedonian

I chose to study Macedonian at the VSL as it was the perfect opportunity to learn about my heritage and develop a deeper connection to my roots. The most enjoyable aspect of studying Macedonian at the VSL would have to be engaging with my classmates and developing life-long friendships with them. The biggest challenges I faced were dealing with stress levels when it came to SACs and the Exam. While the benefits of learning a language are ultimately endless, the biggest benefit for me is being able to efficiently communicate with my grandparents who only know how to speak Macedonian. To anyone studying a language, I recommend not just studying it for the sake of completing VCE units, but instead finding a passion for the language and genuinely enjoying it! In the future, my goal is to become a dentist. Learning Macedonian could be beneficial to my career as it would help me communicate with patients who are only able to speak Macedonian, therefore providing them with an easier and clearer experience.



Sonakshi Verma – Hindi

I decided to study Hindi at VSL with the sole aim of respecting and promoting the international recognition Hindi has and the culture that it brings with itself. The VSL, in my opinion, paves the way towards great career opportunities primarily associated with Hindi, ultimately allowing others and me to create a home away from home. Studying Hindi was a compelling experience. To be specific, a student who has undergone education systems of both countries, to be able to perceive the disparity between India's Hindi curriculum and the one here, stands out vividly. The VSL, with its advanced approach, presents content in a more practical manner unveiling new horizons and leaving a lasting impression. My teacher, Miss Thethi, a true saviour, helped me find the right balance. Talking about my struggles, the distinction between oral and written language usage was a challenge I faced. Her guidance helped me overcome this barrier and emphasised the necessity of knowing the disparities between both. In my opinion, a language brings with it culture and identity. For me, Hindi and my Indian roots make up most of who I am, what values I possess and how I process the world around me. It is my identity. Similarly, one should pursue Hindi to discover new sides of themselves and the world around them. Hindi or any other language, is going to significantly help one to create their presence in the world. Pursuing a medical career is what I have planned. Being a proud Hindi speaker, I have plans to participate in various events held by the Indian consulate and other organisations exchange new experiences, ideas, and skills, ultimately promoting Hindi at an international level.

VCE High Scorers from 2023



Rose Mary Lynn Sawmhal – Chin Hakha

I studied Chin Hakha at the VSL to deepen my connection with my cultural identity and explore the language of my heritage. The most enjoyable part was finding relatability and connecting with my classmates, which made the learning experience incredibly engaging and exciting. For me, pursuing language study has been a journey of self-discovery, allowing me to understand my own identity. Language study enhances communication and fosters connections between diverse cultures, enriching mutual understanding.

My advice to younger students is to go beyond the classroom and the textbook. Look into music, literature, and videos, and talk to other Chin speakers. Immerse yourself in the language and culture. Engage in cultural events like Chin Miphun Ni, which strengthen your sense of community and unity of having a like heritage. Surrounding yourself with language materials and consistent practice will boost your confidence and fluency in using Chin Hakha effectively.

I am currently studying Health Sciences at Monash University, driven by a strong aspiration to contribute to the healthcare field. My vision is to pursue a career in bilingual healthcare settings, where I can serve as an advocate for communities facing linguistic barriers like my Chin community.



Hernoor Kaur – Punjabi

I learned Punjabi to stay connected and learn more about my rich culture and heritage. I completed Punjabi as an accelerated subject which allowed me to focus on it more in Year 11 and have fewer subjects in Year 12.

I enjoyed seeing the vibrant and lively aspect of the VSL community, where people of all backgrounds came together to learn different languages. I also enjoyed meeting new people from the Punjabi community (teachers and classmates) and getting to learn more about them. Learning with them together in the classroom created a fun and enthusiastic environment where we could contribute and share our ideas and improve them to excel in our marks. Even though I grew up speaking the language, I was always able to learn something new in every class.

My advice to younger students would be to stay resilient and keep putting in hard work throughout the year. Learning a language is a marathon, not a sprint, therefore ensuring that you are consistent throughout the year is key in succeeding and excelling with good marks.

The Punjabi community in Victoria is constantly growing, therefore, learning this language will undoubtedly allow me to communicate with people from my community to make them feel that they are welcome and belong.



Harley (Zihao) Weng – Chinese First Language

We were introduced to the VSL in school. I found that VCE Chinese is very different from the Chinese language in China. It does not test the recitation and dictation of poems, nor does it test the appreciation of words and sentences in classical Chinese. When I faced VCE Chinese for the first time, it was relatively unfamiliar. I found that by learning a language I was able to make more friends. I also think that there may be additional work options available to me in the future. I would like to study education at Monash University - maybe I'll teach Chinese.

VCE High Scorers from 2023



Elif Dicle - Turkish

Studying Turkish at the VSL allowed me to maintain my connection with Turkish culture despite living outside Türkiye. It also enabled me to practice and further develop my writing and speaking skills in an out-of-home setting. I was able to meet and socialise with people from the Turkish community every weekend. I made friends who have had similar life experiences as me and bonded over those experiences.

I found preparing for the oral component of the final exam challenging as I did not know what kind of questions the examiners would ask. Mock orals conducted with our teacher and gathering as much information as I could on my chosen topic helped. Being well prepared also helped with my fear of public speaking as I believe that I was more confident going into the oral exam. Having to wake up early every Saturday was not easy either, but it was worth it.

Some advice I would give to language students is to not put off studying for SAC's or exams just because you are fluent in the language you are taking. Focus on the areas you feel less confident - even the shortest revision session will help.

I hope to become a clinical psychologist as I am passionate about helping others. Through my language skills, I could assist Turkish individuals living in Australia to access psychological support.



Savio Mjuka - Arabic

I had been trying to study Arabic since I came to Australia, but it wasn't possible in my home school therefore studying at the VSL was the best option for me. The best thing about studying at VSL was the chance to meet new people with the same interests. Studying Arabic was a bit hard because we needed to be able to translate from English to Arabic and the opposite. The benefit of studying a language is that it opens a lot of doors to new cultures and enhances communication skills. I found that consistency is the key, so make it a daily habit - surround yourself with the language through movies, music, and reading materials. Practice speaking with others and use language learning apps for interactive learning, and the most important thing use your teachers. I plan to be able to help people who speak Arabic and make their lives easier.



Bori Kovacs - Hungarian

My family is Hungarian so it felt natural to study the language at the VSL. I enjoyed interacting with other students and making new friends. Getting to Dandenong every Saturday morning was an effort as we lived far away but it was worth it. Hungarian is a complex language and I found it easy to make silly mistakes sometimes. But I overcame this by practising and always left time to reread work. My advice to everyone studying a language would be to immerse yourself as much as possible in the language and culture. Practice speaking and listening regularly, even if it's just for a few minutes each day. An easy way to do this is by watching movies and TV shows in your language by changing the audio. Don't be afraid to make mistakes; they're an essential part of the learning process. And most important of all - don't leave the homework to the last minute. I believe that learning another language will only bring advantages in life. I would love to study abroad and do an exchange trip in Europe where I can travel and spend more time in Hungary using what I have learnt to my advantage.

VCE High Scorers from 2023



Vinu Karunaratne – Sinhala

I chose to study Sinhala at the VSL to reconnect with my cultural heritage and deepen my understanding of my roots. My interest in the rich culture and language of Sri Lanka motivated me further, as I saw it as an opportunity to expand my language skills and cultural awareness. The most enjoyable aspect of studying Sinhala at the VSL was the immersion into the language and culture. I found it fascinating to learn about the customs, traditions, and history of Sri Lanka while simultaneously improving my language skills through interactive lessons and cultural activities. I believe language study improves cognitive skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and multitasking. My advice to younger students studying a language would be to embrace the process and stay committed. Language learning takes time and practice, so don't get discouraged by initial difficulties. Immerse yourself in the language as much as possible through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Additionally, don't hesitate to seek help from teachers, peers, or online resources when needed, and try to engage with native speakers to improve your proficiency and cultural understanding. I intend to use my language skills to actively contribute to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. I aspire to educate people about the diverse cultures, traditions, and history of Sri Lanka, so that they are appreciated and celebrated.



Caren Albayad - Arabic

I came to Australia in 2021 and the VSL was a perfect opportunity for me to keep my identity alive. I enjoyed getting to know other people from other Arabic countries which exposed me to different cultures and traditions. The funniest part was comparing words of the same meaning in different dialects which made me dive deeper into the Arabic language.

Arabic is one of the world's major languages, and proficiency in it can open various career opportunities in fields such as diplomacy, international relations, business, journalism, and academia.

My takeaway from successfully learning a language is:

- Consistency is Key:

Make language learning a regular part of your routine. Even studying a little bit every day is more effective than cramming all at once.

- Practice Speaking:

Don't be afraid to speak! Speaking is an essential aspect of language learning. Practice speaking aloud, whether it's by repeating phrases, having conversations with classmates, or even talking to yourself in the mirror. The more you speak, the more confident you'll become.

- Be Patient and Persistent:

Language learning takes time and effort, so be patient with yourself.

I am currently in my first year of studying Bachelor of Biomedicine at La Trobe University, aiming to become a doctor in the future and would also like to pursue voluntary translation work.

School Updates

Key Dates Term 2, 2024

April 20	Term 2 begins
April 25	ANZAC Day
May 18	Lockdown Drill
June 8	King's Birthday
June 29	VCE Only Classes F-10 PTI/Report Distribution

Annual Privacy Reminder for our School Community

Our school collects, uses, discloses and stores student and parent personal information for standard school functions or where permitted by law, as stated in the Schools' Privacy Policy.

Please take time to read our school's collection notice, found on our website www.vsl.vic.edu.au. We ask parents to also review the guidance we provide on how we use Microsoft 365/Microsoft Teams safely at the school and what parents can do to further protect their child's information. If after reviewing the guidance, you have any questions or concerns regarding your child using Microsoft 365/Microsoft Teams, please contact the school.

For more information about privacy, refer to **Schools' Privacy Policy - Information for parents** at <https://bit.ly/33oiose>

This information is also available in ten community languages:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Dari
- Gujarati
- Mandarin
- Somali
- Sudanese
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Vietnamese

VSL Professional Development Day

On February 3 2024 all VSL staff attended the statewide professional development sessions which were held at various locations. As the VSL is committed to the safety of our students, the emphasis on the day was Child Safety. Many of the Administration staff underwent First Aid courses and CPR training and all staff attended briefings on the Child Safe Standards, Mandatory Reporting, Anaphylaxis and other Child Safe components and policies.

During the second half of the day the focus was on Curriculum. Teachers discussed how to improve student outcomes by improving student engagement in language learning. The High impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) were referenced and the focus was on the first strategy, 'Setting Goals'. Teachers also discussed other curriculum areas such as ACER tests and writing compliant VCE Assessment Tasks.

The feedback regarding the PD day was most positive. Staff were provided with an opportunity to share their ideas and resources, which in turn also enhanced collegiality within the VSL.

Pashalia Eglezos
Area Manager, West 1



Area Manager, Pashalia Eglezos, with the West 1 staff

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and learn and would like to pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.