

VICTORIAN SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

# FAMILY & STAFF BULLETIN

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ISSUE 1 / FEBRUARY 2025





# WELCOME

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the start of the new year!

To our returning families, we hope that you have had a relaxing break and look forward to a productive year of learning ahead. To our new families, we extend a warm welcome and trust that your association with the VSL will be a long and happy one.

Thank you to everyone for your patience as we transitioned our enrolment system this year. I assure you we have done our best, but there are inevitably some challenges along the way. These challenges are complicated by the sheer number of students we enrol across Victoria, this year over 16,000 enrolment requests for face-to-face classes across 48 languages from Prep to Year 12, in addition to around 1,800 Distance Education requests. We will continue to work on our systems and processes to make them more streamlined.

Congratulations to our VCE class of 2024, who once again achieved outstanding results! Our mean study score was again above state average and we look forward to hearing of our students receiving Premier's Awards later in the year. Congratulations also to their dedicated teachers, who supported their efforts. Later in this Bulletin you will see a breakdown of our achievement – congratulations to all.

On Saturday February 1, the VSL celebrated its 90th anniversary at the all-staff professional learning day at University High School. It was a wonderful occasion of reflection on the past, and vision for the future. The day began with Wurundjeri elder Bill Nicholson welcoming us all to the land on which we were meeting, and connecting the traditional owners experience of language with that of the language teachers of the VSL. Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education David Howes noted the outstanding results achieved over the years by the VSL, and the importance of developing a consistent language continuum across our school, which was one focus of our professional learning day. Professor Joe Lo Bianco reminded us of the success of the VSL in sustaining and growing languages, and the role which we play in supporting

the development of a rich cultural society. He inspired and challenged the audience around their roles as community leaders and teachers. Finally our School Council President Bruna Pasqua acknowledged the role of Frank Merlino and past principals, school councils and the Department of Education in supporting the direction of the school for 90 years.

On the topic of School Councils, they play a vital role in Victorian government schools and are established and operate under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic), the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic) and a constituting Order. The VSL constituting order enables representation from parents, staff, community and nominees from a variety of sectors with relevant expertise which support our Council decision making.

Each year, vacancies occur on our Council in these categories. Later in this bulletin you will find details of this year's School Council election and how you can nominate should you wish to do so. All School Council members are required to undertake Governance Training to support their understanding of their role.

I wish you all a successful start to VSL language studies in 2025.

Thank you for your support.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judi Benney'.

JUDI BENNEY, EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL



# 90TH ANNIVERSARY PD

VIQUI GRAS, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

What an amazing way to start this special year! A state-wide celebration and professional learning day that gathered staff at University High School, one of our oldest VSL centres. There were close to a thousand people in attendance.

The first part of the day was a celebration of the school's achievements since its foundation in 1935. We were honored to have Professor Joe Lo Bianco, world renowned linguist and school council patron, who presented a webinar for VSL parents last year on how to maintain the home language. On this occasion, he highlighted the role of the VSL to help maintain community languages in Victoria by contributing to what he believes are 'the necessary and sufficient conditions to reverse language shift' (Lo Bianco and Peyton-Kreeft (2013), i.e. the loss of migrant languages. These are summarised in COD, which stands for Capacity, Opportunity and Desire. By attending classes, students build capacity in their language but creating opportunities and the desire to use it are elements that both teachers and community leaders can contribute to as well.

The second part of the day was devoted to compliance for teachers, who need to be trained in anaphylactic reaction response, child safety standards and mandatory reporting.

The final part was a hands-on session for teachers to work with all their same language colleagues to work on a consistent understanding of the progression continuum and assessment practices of the F-10 curriculum.

Marten Koomen, Data Insights and Reports Manager at VCAA, shared his expertise with VCE teachers about statistical moderation and how important their role is to help students receive the best results in VCE.

Our admin staff were also busy updating their first aid training and completing a session led by our Strategic Operations Manager, Ross McDonald, on Compass protocols as we transition to this student management system.

All in all, a celebratory and productive day for all staff as they get ready to start a new year at the VSL. All the best to all staff and students!





# VCE RESULTS 2024

Congratulations to all our VCE students who completed a language study with the VSL in 2024. Once again, our results were outstanding so a big thanks to all the committed teachers and families for their continued support.

In 2024, a total of **3,270** students completed one of our courses at VCE level (Year 11 and 12), 2,378 at centres and 892 at Distance Education (DE).

There were **183 students** who received a study score of 40+, 29 more than in 2023. In addition, 5 students received a perfect score of 50 and 17 students received the top score of the State.

We are looking forward to a new year of success, all the best to all current students embarking in VCE this year!

## VCE HIGH SCORERS FROM 2024

**We congratulate all of our 2024 VCE students who completed their VCE language studies.**

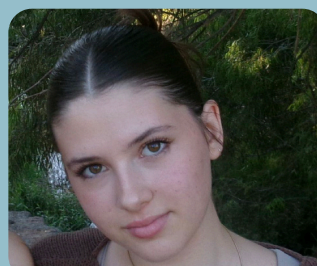
The following students were amongst the high scorers in Victoria in their respective language. In the following pages they reminisce about their experiences during the school year.



**ALYSA BROSZCZYK,  
ITALIAN**

Going into Year 12, Italian was one of my biggest passions, and I wanted to improve my skills and achieve a high score in a subject I'd been studying

since I was 8. Though I'd never been to Italy and came from an English-speaking household, I pushed myself by completing coursework and immersing myself in the language through Italian TV shows and cultural events like the Sanremo Music Festival. This helped me expand my vocabulary and motivated me to speak Italian as well as native speakers. While it was challenging at first, I believe immersion is the best way to improve. Learning Italian has opened up new opportunities to enjoy Italian music, books, and current affairs, connecting me with my cultural heritage and Italian immigrant grandparents. As I begin university this year studying Commerce, I plan to continue Italian as an elective and look forward to future trips to Italy, where I'll be able to live like a local thanks to my language skills.



**ARIEL KENNEDY, ITALIAN**

I chose to study Italian at the VSL to reconnect with my culture and family. Having grown up in Italy, I felt a strong attachment to its unique culture and didn't want to lose that

connection by not speaking the language. The VSL gave me the chance to bond with others who shared similar goals and pushed me to become the best student I could be. This year has been challenging due to my mother's breast cancer diagnosis, which deeply affected me. At first, it led me to lose motivation, but I realised she would want me to succeed, which reignited my passion for learning. Studying Italian also deepened my understanding of Italian immigration history in Australia, something personally significant. I owe much of my success to my teacher's passion and support, which helped me engage deeply with the subject. In the future, I plan to travel and study abroad, and knowing Italian will help me stay connected to my roots, share the culture with others, and experience new perspectives through language.



# VCE HIGH SCORERS FROM 2024



**EH BWAY PAW LAN,  
KAREN**

Studying at the VSL has helped me preserve my culture and identity while improving my fluency and reading skills. It also contributed to boosting

my ATAR for university. One of the biggest challenges I faced was mastering spelling, especially with two similar-sounding alphabet sounds that were hard to differentiate. Another difficulty was waking up every Saturday for school, which meant sacrificing personal activities like sports competitions, as attendance was crucial in Year 12. One of the most significant things I learned was about Karen history, including the symbolism behind their flags and the meaning of different hues. I also gained a deeper understanding of their culture, beliefs, and the values passed on to younger generations. I see myself using this knowledge by teaching the language to younger generations, helping them preserve their identity, and assisting those struggling to speak or write in their mother tongue. I'm grateful to my teacher, Mrs. Corina, whose personal stories about the hardships faced by the Karen people have been invaluable. Her dedication, generosity, and compassion will always be remembered.



**MAHDIS SOROUGH,  
PERSIAN**

Coming from a Persian background, I wanted to deepen my cultural, historical, and literary understanding of the language, and studying it at the VSL as a VCE subject

seemed like the perfect opportunity. This year, my biggest challenge was struggling with motivation, which started to impact my academic performance. To tackle this, I sought advice from mentors and teachers, set realistic goals, and worked on balancing school with time for my

wellbeing. Over time, this approach helped me regain focus. Studying VCE Persian allowed me to explore Persian literature and culture in depth. Reading works by brilliant poets and writers broadened my understanding of Iranian values, beliefs, and political views, which gave me a more open perspective on Persian history and politics. My goal is to become a dentist, and knowing Persian will be an invaluable asset both personally and professionally. It will help me connect better with Persian-speaking patients and serve Persian-speaking communities, building trust and understanding while staying connected to my own cultural roots.



**MAHDYAR SABZI VAND,  
PERSIAN**

I chose to study Persian at the VSL because of its strong reputation for high-quality language education. The inclusive curriculum allowed me

to explore both the language and its cultural aspects, making the experience more enriching. The supportive and knowledgeable teachers kept me motivated and confident throughout my studies. Studying Persian in Year 11 gave me more time to dedicate to the language, but balancing this with other demanding subjects was challenging. I found that effective time management, like creating weekly planners and study sessions, helped me stay organised and maintain balance. This experience boosted my confidence in writing and communication and deepened my appreciation for Persian and its cultural heritage. As I approach Year 12, I plan to give my best effort to lay a strong foundation for my future. The skills I've gained in Persian will continue to benefit me in personal connections, further studies, and professional opportunities, helping me stay connected to both my language and the world around me.



# VCE HIGH SCORERS FROM 2024



**MAKHOUL ZAIDAN,  
ARABIC**

I decided to study Arabic at the VSL based on recommendations from my teachers, recognising how valuable the language would be for my ATAR and

long-term goals. The biggest challenge in Year 12 was balancing study with extracurricular activities. To manage this, I created a detailed study schedule, prioritised tasks, and made time for regular breaks to stay focused and avoid burnout. Since Arabic is my first language, this opportunity helped me enhance both my language skills and cultural understanding. Looking ahead, I plan to become a doctor, and fluency in Arabic will open up more job opportunities in Arabic-speaking communities. It will also allow me to connect better with patients and colleagues, improving communication and enabling me to provide better care.



**SHUBHI GARG, HINDI**

As a native Hindi speaker, the language has profoundly shaped my personal growth, influencing both my early years and contemporary perspectives. I chose to study Hindi in Year

12 to deepen my understanding of the language and improve my written and oral communication skills. Time management was crucial, especially with the heavy course load of studying multiple subjects in Year 11. This experience helped me develop better time management practices, such as scheduling and time-blocking. The knowledge I've gained about Indian culture, society, and traditions through my Hindi studies has been invaluable, and the close relationships I've built with my teacher and classmates are something I cherish. In the future, I plan to maintain academic rigor throughout Year 12 and pursue a science degree at the University of Melbourne. I also hope to apply my Hindi skills to translation work, acting as a bridge for intercultural understanding and contributing to Melbourne's diverse, multicultural community.



**SANJITA CHOUDHARY,  
HINDI**

Growing up in Australia, I felt disconnected from my family and heritage in India due to not speaking Hindi fluently and having limited knowledge of

Indian culture. Studying Hindi at the VSL was a chance to reconnect with my Indian roots, and being able to study it as a Year 12 subject was a bonus. Completing Year 12 Hindi in Year 11 was challenging, especially when self-doubt crept in, making me question my ability to write a cohesive piece. Staying motivated during these tough moments was my biggest challenge. I overcame this by talking to my teacher, Mr. Misra, and seeking support from my family and friends, who helped me set realistic goals. Through this journey, I gained valuable knowledge about Indian culture, history, and language. Next year, I plan to pursue Medicine, and I also hope to travel to places like Jaipur, where I can use the skills I've developed through VSL Hindi to connect with the culture and people, making it a lifelong asset.



**NIHARIKA CHOPRA,  
HINDI**

Hindi is my mother tongue, and studying it allowed me to strengthen my connection to my cultural heritage. I had learned the basics a few years ago and

wanted to revisit and deepen my understanding. Since I studied Hindi as an external VCE subject alongside my school subjects, balancing time for everything was challenging. To manage, I created a disciplined routine with daily practice—writing essays, doing listening comprehensions, and seeking advice from my teacher, Ms. Modi, who offered valuable feedback and motivation. Studying Hindi also introduced me to a wonderful community of learners, helping me form lasting friendships with my peers. Looking ahead, I plan to continue studying other languages while keeping my Hindi knowledge alive, as it helps me stay connected to my culture.



## VCE HIGH SCORERS FROM 2024



### SIYA GAURI SINGH, HINDI

I chose to study Hindi at the VSL to strengthen my connection to my cultural roots and heritage. Learning the language deepened my appreciation for my culture and helped me build

stronger ties within my community. The biggest challenge I faced was managing my time effectively across multiple subjects. To overcome this, I created a weekly to-do list

and prioritised tasks. The most valuable takeaway from studying Hindi has been the stronger connection to my culture and improved communication skills, which have helped me connect better with my community. Looking ahead, I plan to pursue a career in Science. On a personal level, knowing Hindi will be an asset, allowing me to maintain close ties with my family and continue exploring my cultural heritage. I also hope that my language skills can contribute to promoting cultural diversity in Australia.

## CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

The VSL is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families. We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students. Please take the time to read our school's full Child Safety and Wellbeing policy on our website [www.vsl.vic.edu.au](http://www.vsl.vic.edu.au)

## ANNUAL PRIVACY POLICY 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](http://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://www.vic.gov.au/schools-privacy-policy-information-parents>





# NOTICE OF ELECTION AND CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

An election is to be conducted for members of the school council of the **Victorian School of Languages**.

Nomination forms are attached, and must be lodged to the Returning Officer, via email to [maryc@vsl.vic.edu.au](mailto:maryc@vsl.vic.edu.au), by 4.00pm on **Monday 17 February 2025**.

The ballot will close at **1.00pm on Saturday, 1 March 2025**.

Following the closing of nominations, a list of the nominations received will be posted at the school and the VSL website.

The terms of office, membership categories and number of positions in each membership category open for election are as follows:

MEMBERSHIP	TERM OF OFFICE	NUMBER OF POSITIONS
Parent member	From the day after the date of the declaration of the poll in 2025 to and inclusive of the date of the declaration of the poll in 2027.	3
School employee member	From the day after the date of the declaration of the poll in 2025 to and inclusive of the date of the declaration.	1

If the number of nominations is less than the number of vacancies, a notice to that effect and calling for further nominations will be posted in a prominent position at the school.

JUDI BENNEY, EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL





## Form 3: self-nomination form for parent member category

I wish to declare my candidacy for an elected position as a parent member on the school council.

Name .....

Residential address .....

Contact phone (mobile or landline).....

Email.....

I am the parent/guardian of..... who is/are currently enrolled at this school.

### Statement

I am an employee of the Department of Education.

Yes / No (please circle)

I am an employee of the school council.

Yes / No (please circle)

I am engaged in work at and for the school.

Yes / No (please circle)

I am prepared to serve as a parent member of the above-named school council. I hereby declare that:

- I am not and have not been insolvent under administration within the last three years
- I am of sound mind
- I have not been found guilty of an offence that is, or would if committed in Victoria be, an indictable offence
- I am not a registrable offender within the meaning of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*.
- I am not suffering from any medical condition that would affect my ability to perform the role of member of a school council.

Signature of candidate..... Date..... / ..... / .....

### You will be notified when your nomination has been received.

The personal information provided in this form is collected as part of the school council election nomination process. The information may be used to determine your eligibility as a candidate. Your personal information may be disclosed as a result of inspection prior to the commencement of voting or at any time up to one year from the declaration of the poll.

Your name will be included in a list of school council candidates and nominators (where applicable) posted in a prominent position at the school and for candidates, on a ballot paper (where applicable). Further, the name, membership category, gender (optional), term of office, office held (if any) of school council members and notification whether the member is an employee of the department will be forwarded to the Department of Education by the principal by 30 April each year as a record of council membership and may be used for statistical purposes.

You can access your personal information by contacting the principal on: [vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au](mailto:vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au)

*If you choose not to give some or all of the information requested your nomination may not be accepted.*

*If you have any queries about the school council nomination process, please contact the principal.*



# Form 4: nomination form for parent member category

I wish to nominate..... for an elected position as a parent member on the school council.

## Candidate's details

Name.....

Residential address.....

Contact phone (mobile or landline).....

Email.....

## Nominators details

I am the parent/guardian of..... who is/are currently enrolled at this school

## Statement

The person I have nominated is an employee of the Department of Education.

Yes / No (please circle)

Is an employee of the school council.

Yes / No (please circle)

Is engaged in work at and for the school.

Yes / No (please circle)

Name of nominator .....

Signature of nominator .....Date..... / ..... / .....

## Candidate to complete

I accept the nomination and I am prepared to serve as a parent member of the above-named school council. I hereby declare that:

- I am not and have not been insolvent under administration within the last 3 years
- I am of sound mind
- I have not been found guilty of an offence that is, or would if committed in Victoria be, an indictable offence
- I am not a registrable offender within the meaning of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*.
- I am not suffering from any medical condition that would affect my ability to perform the role of member of a school council.

Signature of candidate.....Date..... / ..... / .....

## You will be notified when your nomination has been received.

The personal information provided in this form is collected as part of the school council election nomination process. The information may be used to determine your eligibility as a candidate. Your personal information may be disclosed as a result of inspection prior to the commencement of voting or at any time up to one year from the declaration of the poll.

Your name will be included in a list of school council candidates and nominators (where applicable) posted in a prominent position at the school and for candidates, on a ballot paper (where applicable). Further, the name, membership category, gender (optional), term of office, office held (if any) of school council members and notification whether the member is an employee of the department will be forwarded to the department of Education by the principal by 30 April each year as a record of council membership and may be used for statistical purposes.

You can access your personal information by contacting the principal on:[vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au](mailto:vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au)

*If you choose not to give some or all of the information requested your nomination may not be accepted. If you have any queries about the school council nomination process, please contact the principal.*



## Form 5: self-nomination form for school employee member category

I wish to declare my candidacy for an elected position as a school employee member on the

..... school council

### Candidate's details.

Name.....

Residential address.....

Contact phone (mobile or landline).....

Email.....

### Statement

I am an employee of the Department of Education.

Yes / No (please circle)

I am an employee of the school council.

Yes / No (please circle)

I am engaged in work at and for the school.

Yes / No (please circle)

I accept the nomination and I am prepared to serve as a school employee member of the above-named school council. I hereby declare that:

- I am not and have not been insolvent under administration within the last three years
- I am of sound mind
- I have not been found guilty of an offence that is, or would if committed in Victoria be, an indictable offence
- I am not a registrable offender within the meaning of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*.
- I am not suffering from any medical condition that would affect my ability to perform the role of member of a school council.

Signature of candidate.....Date..... / ..... / .....

### You will be notified when your nomination has been received.

The personal information provided in this form is collected as part of the school council election nomination process. The information may be used to determine your eligibility as a candidate. Your personal information may be disclosed as a result of inspection prior to the commencement of voting or at any time up to one year from the declaration of the poll.

Your name will be included in a list of school council candidates and nominators (where applicable) posted in a prominent position at the school and for candidates, on a ballot paper (where applicable). Further, the name, membership category, gender (optional), term of office, office held (if any) of school council members and notification whether the member is an employee of the department will be forwarded to the department of Education by the principal by 30 April each year as a record of council membership and may be used for statistical purposes.

You can access your personal information by contacting the principal on: [vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au](mailto:vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au)

*If you choose not to give some or all of the information requested your nomination may not be accepted.*

*If you have any queries about the school council nomination process, please contact the principal.*



## Form 6: nomination form for school employee member category

I wish to nominate..... for an elected position as a school employee member on the school council.

### Candidate's details

Name.....

Residential address.....

Contact phone (mobile or landline).....

Email.....

I am an employee of the Department of Education.

Yes / No (please circle)

### Statement

The person I have nominated is:

an employee of the Department of Education. Yes / No (please circle)

an employee of the school council. Yes / No (please circle)

engaged in work at and for the school. Yes / No (please circle)

Name of nominator .....

Signature of nominator ..... Date..... / ..... / .....

### Candidate to complete

I accept the nomination and I am prepared to serve as a school employee member of the above-named school council. I hereby declare that:

- I am not and have not been insolvent under administration within the last 3 years
- I am of sound mind
- I have not been found guilty of an offence that is, or would if committed in Victoria be, an indictable offence
- I am not a registrable offender within the meaning of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*.
- I am not suffering from any medical condition that would affect my ability to perform the role of member of a school council.

Signature of candidate..... Date..... / ..... / .....

### You will be notified when your nomination has been received.

The personal information provided in this form is collected as part of the school council election nomination process. The information may be used to determine your eligibility as a candidate. Your personal information may be disclosed as a result of inspection prior to the commencement of voting or at any time up to one year from the declaration of the poll.

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Further, the name, membership category, gender (optional), term of office, office held (if any) of school council members and notification whether the member is an employee of the department will be forwarded to the department by the principal by 30 April each year as a record of council membership and may be used for statistical purposes.

You can access your personal information by contacting the principal on: [vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au](mailto:vsl@vsl.vic.edu.au)

*If you choose not to give some or all of the information requested your nomination may not be accepted.*

*If you have any queries about the school council nomination process, please contact the principal.*

# KEY DATES TERM 1 2025

FEBRUARY 8	First day of Centre Classes (Saturday)
MARCH 8	Labour Day Long Weekend
MARCH 29	Last F-10 Class for Term 1
APRIL 5	VCE Only Classes
APRIL 26	Term 2 Classes Start

