The Victorian School of Languages celebrated the academic achievements of 2009’s VCE students at the University of Melbourne earlier this year.

More than 500 family and friends attended the VCE Top Scorers Evening to acknowledge the 176 VSL students who were classed as ‘top achievers’ by obtaining scores between 40 and 50. There were 21 students who topped the State in their respective language and of these, three students achieved the perfect score of 50 – two in French and one in Vietnamese.

Guests included members of the Consular Corps, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools Victoria, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

School Council President Dr Bruno Mascitelli congratulated the top scorers and said their achievements showed that the school was a quality as well as a quantity provider of languages.

“Various academics that I meet around the world find it hard to believe that there is a school or a service in far away Australia that teaches over 40 languages and that students get credit for their language studies at the primary and secondary school levels and for university entrance. We really do have something special,” Dr Mascitelli said.

The keynote address was delivered by the Hon Tim Holding MP, Minister for Water, Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission and Minister for Tourism and Major Events. Mr Holding was representing the Minister for Education, the Hon Bronwyn Pike MP.

Mr Holding said that the fact the English language was so common around the world could lead to people using this as an excuse not to learn another language. If this happened, it would be a decision society would regret forever.

“I think one of the great things that the VSL is doing in the celebration of its 75th year is that it is investing in Victorian people, in Australians, an enthusiasm for learning foreign languages,” the Minister said.

Mr Holding acknowledged that learning foreign languages was important for cultural and commercial reasons. However, he said there were other reasons why English speaking people should learn a foreign language.

He said we lived in a world where there were many conflicts and it was his view that some of these occurred because of misunderstandings between faiths and cultures.

“If we insist that the dialogue we use to overcome these misunderstandings can only be conducted in the medium of English then I fear we will perpetuate and reinforce some of the very perceptions and stereotypes that have given rise to these misunderstandings in the first place,” Mr Holding said.

“We owe it to the rest of the world to learn and understand other cultures not through the prism of English but through the prism of their languages, the languages of other people, the languages of many of the people gathered in this room tonight,” he said.

Learning another language and trying to make yourself understood in a language that is not your own is an incredibly humbling experience, Mr Holding said.

The Minister explained that he had first hand knowledge of this as a current VSL student learning Arabic. Mr Holding said he was also learning German with the Goethe Institute.

He said it was great to be among so many students who had achieved great success in learning another language.

“You can be the ambassadors among English speaking people to impress upon all of us the importance of learning new languages to make the world a smaller and friendlier place,” Mr Holding said.

“To each and every one of you tonight we say congratulations on all you have achieved thank you for all the enthusiasm and passion you have brought to your language learning, we are so proud of you,” he said.

The Principal, Mr Frank Merlino, acknowledged the dedication and enthusiasm of teachers and parents who had supported students throughout their studies to ensure they reached their potential.

“Our school’s main strength is our teaching staff, whose dedication and enthusiasm produces high quality results,” Mr Merlino said.
"Some 2,000 of our students last year successfully completed their Year 12 studies in LOTE. The VSL devotes a lot of time and energy to improving the quality of language teaching and in promoting the study of languages," he said.

Both Dr Mascitelli and Mr Merlino spoke of the development of the National Curriculum and advised that the VSL was an active participant in the consultations and was developing its submissions to the Federal Government.

“Australians need to learn an array of languages – for reasons of trade, security, proximity, history, culture, intellectual reasons, tourism and recreational pursuits," Dr Mascitelli said.

Mr Merlino also thanked VSL Area Manager Venetia Kefalianos for co-ordinating the Top Scorers evening and Assistant Principal Stefo Stojanovski who acted as MC.

Presentations were also given by two VSL students who distinguished themselves with ‘perfect scores’ of 50. French students Alice Walker from Orbost and Holly Jones from Wangaratta completed their language studies via the Distance Education course offered by the VSL.

Alice and Holly told the audience of the benefits they would gain from their language studies.

“Learning another language is a very enriching experience, opening your eyes and mind to the world and its possibilities. My high score in French also helped me obtain a scholarship with my chosen university, so thank you very much VSL,” Alice said.

Holly said she gained a valuable insight into different cultures by studying a language. “Learning a language is different from learning other subjects in that it is continuous and you build on your skills every year. Languages are the subject that can be most directly applied to real life,” Holly said.

The other VSL student to achieve a ‘perfect score’ of 50 was Lan Chi Le who studied Vietnamese.

The students were presented with their certificates by the Minister. Students who topped the state in their language also received a book voucher from the VSL. Members of the Consular Corps also made presentations to students.

The audience was also entertained by Jessica Fotinos who played the harp and former Croatian student Larissa Mamusa who sang several songs.

At the conclusion of the Top Scorers evening, students, parents, special guests and VSL staff gathered in the Copland Theatre foyer for a light supper and a further opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the VCE Top Scorers of 2009.
New Centres at Hume Central SC & Westall SC off to a great start

New Centres at Hume Central Secondary College and Westall Secondary College got off to a great start this year. Due to the closure of the Springvale Secondary College the decision was made in November 2009 to replace it with Westall Secondary College in South Clayton. Westall SC has a demonstrated record of teaching languages and also has an international focus. In conjunction with the Westall English Language Centre, Westall provides overseas students with important social and academic language skills. The former Principal, Vernita Zagouris, was keen to add the VSL service to her building as it would provide additional language choice to her students. The support has been continued by the new Principal, David Tyson, who has highlighted that the College’s students, teachers and parents make up a culturally diverse learning community where languages are valued. “We therefore welcome the presence of the VSL as it will offer students further opportunities to learn a second language or maintain their mother tongue,” he said. “Westall Secondary College believes that the VSL will provide an opportunity for our school to be a hub in the community. The VSL’s commitment of quality language provision and to general excellence will enhance the LOTE program at our college over time. The College also hopes that the general community will see Westall Secondary College as a school of choice for the future for their children who may be engaged in Saturday language classes. The VSL is in its 75th Anniversary year and Westall Secondary College is proud to be associated with an education provider that has a long tradition of excellence in the community. “ Mr Tyson stated.

The Westall VSL centre started operation in late January 2010 offering Vietnamese and Khmer languages from Year 1-12. More than 380 students are currently enrolled. The Vietnamese VCE language provision is particularly strong with four Year 11 and 12 classes. The potential for growth in this centre is very sound as many feeder primary and secondary school in this region do not offer a LOTE program.

The Supervisor is Brian Rollason and he is supported by Assistant Supervisor Russel Davies. For information on student enrolments contact the Area Manager, Roslyn Tsao on 9558 5566.

The largest VSL Centre in the northern suburbs is at Roxburgh College where we use every possible classroom. The shortage of space meant that we have not been able to meet recent demand from the area. We were therefore pleased to enter into an arrangement with the new Hume Central Secondary College and its Principal Glenn Proctor. The Broadmeadows area is undergoing a vast school building program which will see the development of three new state of the art campuses with the new feature of flexible learning spaces. The VSL Centre is located at the Blair Street Campus in Broadmeadows and has started this year with classes in Syriac and Vietnamese. The VSL is also fortunate in having Hume Central’s teacher Ramarzan Tirli as its first Supervisor, ably assisted by Nahla Messo. The Area Manager is Khalaf Greis and he can be contacted on 9464 0848 for enrolments.

Mr Proctor welcomes the VSL classes. “Our college is a culturally rich and diverse learning community committed to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in school and life”, he said. “Providing extra language choice will add to our school provision and I hope that we can add additional languages in the coming years.”

VSL Principal Frank Merlino was delighted with the new arrangements established at both Hume Central and Westall Secondary Colleges and thanked both Principals for their co-operation and support. He also thanked Assistant Principal Megan Blair and Area Managers Roslyn Tsao and Khalaf Greis for their work in establishing their centres. He hoped that these partnerships will last for many years.
The following students received the top marks in Victoria in their language at the 2009 VCE examinations. In the following pages they outline some of their experiences.

**BOSNIAN**

Nadia Alagic  
**Top student in State for Bosnian**  
I studied Bosnian because I wanted to learn more about the tradition and culture of Bosnia, and to increase my chances of receiving a good ENTER score. I'm sure it will help me in the future, wherever I may be. It’s also essential to learn about other traditions and cultures. My main study tip is to make sure you get the homework done on time - never leave studying until the last minute, it doesn’t work. I plan on going to university and undertaking a business/commerce degree.

**CROATIAN**

Ivona Lonac  
**Top student in State for Croatian**  
I feel that it is important and highly beneficial to be able to communicate in more than one language and you are also broadening your horizons. One must study regularly and not intermittently. Just be consistent. Write a letter to a friend, even if it’s imagined and hand it in to your teacher so she can correct your errors. I did this a lot and it really helped me. Practice is the best way to improve in anything, including learning a language. I’m currently studying journalism, and I’m majoring in politics and the economy. I’m also studying Spanish and Italian and I hope to one day speak these two languages fluently.

**DUTCH**

Julia Mijnhout  
**Top student in State for Dutch**  
Studying a language and culture gives you a broader perspective on others and where they come from. It also assists in communication between a greater group of people, and I think it gives a sense or feeling of accomplishment when you can interact with not only English-speaking people, but people who speak French, German, Spanish or other languages. When I moved to Australia I decided that it was best to continue to extend my knowledge in the language and complete the Dutch VCE course. The best way to do well in a VCE language is to speak in the language as often as possible, and to read as many books as you can find in the language. I also found that making a booklet on language rules and on the things you often get wrong helps you to remember how to do it right. My career plans are to complete a psychology course at university, and to go to different countries to help people less fortunate than me.

**FILIPINO**

Marie Carmella Pedres  
**Top student in State for Filipino**  
Filipino is my family language and I wanted to study it and further my speaking skills at a higher level. It is important to study a language intently and thoroughly; and to practise it regularly. As we live in a diverse world the need for better communication is essential. I am currently studying a Bachelor of Nursing at Deakin University.

**HINDI**  

Amarpreet Kaur  
**Top student in State for Hindi**  
When you come to a new country you need to remember your language and stay connected with it. I think it also makes you a better citizen. With the growing economic and cultural links with India I have no doubt that my knowledge of Hindi, the official language of India, will be very useful in the future. It is interesting that a couple of Bollywood films have been made in Australia. To do well you simply have to study hard. There is no alternative even if you think you are good and you always need to ask your teacher as many questions as you can. I am currently studying Year 12 at Pembroke SC. I would like to study science at the University of Melbourne.

**FRENCH**

Holly Jones  
**Premier’s Award winner**

Equal top student in State for French - perfect score of 50  
Language and culture go hand in hand, so by learning a language you gain valuable insight into different cultures, and of course you can communicate with millions more people. Learning a language is different from learning other subjects in that it is continuous, and you build on your skills every year. As the only student at my school studying French by distance education, I had to be independent in order to satisfy and complete the course requirements and meet timelines. I am currently studying advanced French at Monash University as part of a Diploma in French, and beginner Spanish as part of my Arts degree. I intend to continue with the language and I would love to get a job at the United Nations one day.

**INDONESIAN 1st Language**

Andhika Hardjanto  
**Top student in State for Indonesian 1st Language**

Students should study Indonesian in Australia because Indonesia is Australia’s neighbour. It is a big country with 220 million people and it is important to improve cultural and economic links between the two nations. When I complete my degree I want to work in the Indonesian Diplomatic Service. I want to improve relationships between Indonesia and other countries in the world, especially with Australia.
Slavka Popouska  
Top student in State for Macedonian  

A small language is just as important as a world language like English and Chinese and it’s essential that students are given the opportunity to speak more than one language. As we have classes once a week it’s important to find the time to constantly revise and speak the language at home, practise your conversation with your friends, and to read as much as possible. This is not easy but you have to find the time. I am now studying civil engineering at RMIT University.

Slavka Popouska

I enjoy being able to express myself in a different language as it gives you a great sense of achievement. It is a very rewarding feeling when you realise that you can speak to a native speaker of that language and he/she can understand you and you can have a real conversation. Studying Macedonian as part of my VCE gave me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge of the language and gave me a better understanding and appreciation of the culture.

I am currently enrolled in Engineering at the University of Melbourne and I am also studying German, improving my skills and learning more about German culture.

My future plans are to finish my degree, majoring in civil engineering and also complete a Diploma of Languages in German.

Amir Hossein Hosseini  
Top student in State for Persian  

The language I studied was my mother tongue and I wanted to complete my knowledge of it and become fluent. My best tip is to have a study schedule or weekly timetable, to stick to it, and to use free study periods at school wisely.

People should study a second language to understand the cultures in their own language and be able to read its literature, poetry and history in the original and appreciate it.

My career plan is to study engineering and try my best to be a good engineer.

Kaya Kapusta  
Top student in State for Polish  

The main reason I chose to study a language was that I wanted to be able to communicate with members of my family who live overseas whether it be by talking to them directly on the phone, sending them emails or when visiting them.

Studying a language provides insight to what may have previously been a completely foreign culture and history, it broadens perspectives and makes communicating easier when travelling. A second language can also be helpful when applying for future jobs.

I found that it was really important to speak the language at home as much as possible, to work diligently on the homework that your teachers set throughout the year, complete as many old exam questions and papers as you can, and never leave things to the last minute, as tempting as it may be.

This year I am finishing my Year 12 and next year I hope to be studying Medicine at Monash University.
Sheli Kuperman  
**Top student in State for Portuguese**

I am from Brazil and I decided to study Portuguese at the VSL to continue to learn my first language, to practise my writing and oral skills that I could have forgotten otherwise.  

My main tip is to practise speaking as much as possible! The oral component is a big part of any language and probably the most useful in most cases. Also, people should try to read books in their chosen language, to improve their vocabulary and understanding of the cultural aspects related to the language.  

Knowing languages is one of the most important skills one can have. When travelling, it is great to be able to understand the people around you and it is only possible to fully grasp a country’s culture when you can speak and understand everyone.  

At this stage I am not completely sure about what I want to do in the future. Everyone.

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Kuljeet Kaur Judge  
**Top student in State for Punjabi**

I studied Punjabi for its cultural benefit as well as for the benefit of a achieving a good VCE score.  

Next year I intend studying Medicine at Monash University  

It’s important to practice both your writing and speaking skills as much as possible and to make great use of your dictionary. When you are with friends and relatives it helps if you can make the effort to speak in the language and not revert to English.  

I enjoyed my Punjabi class and I found that my teacher was a funny person and had a great sense of humour but also was very demanding and did not accept inferior work. He always gave us lots of work to do and extended our skills.  

Next year I intend to study medicine at Monash University.

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Emmanuel Horvat  
**Top student in State for Romanian**

I was interested and continue to be interested in learning more about my language and country. My advice to other students is to speak the language as much as possible and don’t just do the bare minimum of work the teachers give you. Extend yourself by reading challenging pieces be they novels or newspaper articles and research the culture. Languages give you a broader understanding of the world and a greater appreciation of cultural diversity. There are also career opportunities that may open up to you – you never know. I am studying engineering and biomedical sciences at Swinburne University.

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Boris Trakilovic  
**Top student in State for Serbian**

“You are worth as many people as the languages you speak” so goes a proverb of Latin origin.  

Language provides endless opportunities to interact with diverse people and share experiences and knowledge. Apart from learning how to write and speak, studying Serbian also gave me a deeper insight into Serbian culture, music, poetry and film. Learning a second language will be of service for the rest of my life.  

I decided to study Serbian to further enhance my oral and writing skills. Besides being eager to further develop my communication skills the idea of interacting with people my age who spoke the same language really enticed me. Studying Serbian provided an opportunity to create new friendships and learn in a fun and friendly environment.  

My study tips can be summarised as ‘Read, read, read!’. Reading a variety of material is vital and online newspapers are a great place to start. Key areas to focus on are structure and vocabulary.  

I currently study Commerce/Engineering at Monash University.

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Duushani Sudurikku  
**Top student in State for Sinhala**

Obviously being able to speak another language and becoming familiar with it is very useful when you travel. You are obviously better accepted and made to feel welcome if you can communicate. To achieve mastery and better results you need to be consistent and do practice exams throughout the year and not leave revision to the last minute.

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Asiel Yair Adan Sanchez  
**Top student in State for Spanish**

My family is originally from Mexico and I wanted to maintain my links to the culture and the language. Students should expose themselves as much as possible to the variety of material available in the language you are studying such as music, DVDs, television and newspapers. There is a lot of very good material available from Spain and South America.  

If you speak the language of the country you are travelling in it adds to the enjoyment. There are also career advantages and opportunities overseas, especially in medical research, and being able to speak the language can help.
The latest language to be introduced by the Victorian School of Languages is Chin, a language from Myanmar (Burma) and it commenced in February 2010. Chin classes have been held at the Box Hill and Sunshine centres for more than 200 students ranging from Year 1 to Year 10.

There are about 1.5 million people in the Chin-Hakha speaking area of Myanmar near the border with India and Bangladesh in the north west highland plateau. The capital of the Chin state is the City of Hakha with a population of 20,000 people. Due to conflict in the area many thousands of its residents have fled the country. The greatest majority of refugees (some 60,000) are in India and the second largest group (some 30,000) fled to Malaysia. The initial group arrived in Victoria in 2002 and larger numbers in 2006. The settlers have settled in two main areas of Melbourne, in the western and eastern suburbs. The community has been assisted by welfare organisations, church groups and individual leaders. Representatives approached the VSL in 2009 and approval was given for the classes to start in February 2010.

Prior to the commencement textbooks and the curriculum materials were collected, syllabuses were prepared and teachers were selected and trained.

The Chin language uses the Roman alphabet script and 60-70 per cent of the population in the Chin region uses the main version of the language. Dr Dennis Maung believes that the VSL Chin classes in Victoria are the first in the world to be taught by an arm of an Education Department.

The Area Managers of the two centres, Tony Kyoong and Pashalia Eglezos, have remarked on how the Chin students are a friendly and committed group of learners. Their inclusion into their respective centres have also enriched the other languages already there. Some of the enthusiastic teachers have already enquired how the language can be accredited as a VCE subject.

Ms Sui Len Zing Bawihrin, one of the Chin teachers at the Sunshine Centre, has commented that the Chin community is grateful for the opportunity given to its children to study the Chin language and culture. “The students have settled down quickly and are keen to study the language. Thank you to everyone at the Victorian School of Languages and the Department of Education for your support.”
KEY DATES TERM 2 2010

12 April Distance Education teachers return
17 April Term 2 Centre classes commence
25 April Anzac Day holiday - classes not affected
28 April Final day for VCE enrolment/withdrawal
15 May VSL Centres - Professional Development
12 June Queen’s Birthday weekend - no Centre classes
19 June Final day of Centre classes for Term 2

75TH ANNIVERSARY SCHOOL DINNER

Come and be part of a memorable evening to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Victorian School of Languages
Saturday 11 September, 7.00pm at the St Kilda Town Hall (99 Carlisle St, Melway map 58 C 11)
Cost: $60 includes 3 course meal, entertainment and Teacher of the Year Awards and a memento of the evening!
Don’t delay! Book a place or a table by contacting the Supervisor of your nearest VSL Centre or the Head Office on 9474 0500.

TERM 2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Professional Learning Teams

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School Council 2010-2011

At its March meeting, the VSL Council re-elected Dr Bruno Mascitelli as its President, Ms Anna Cavedon as Vice-President and Ms Himalee Karunasena as Treasurer.

New parent members elected unopposed are Mr Ian Sutherland and Mr Kalem Sezer. Other parent/staff members returning are Mr Angpal Singh, Mr Ray Amos and Mr Hasan Sayar. New nominee members are Ms Kathy Macfarlane from Independent Schools Victoria and Ms Victoria Myers from the Catholic Education Office. Mr Atilla Akguner was renominated as a community representative.

Dr Mascitelli thanked retiring members Pina Puddu and Sharyne Rankine for their contribution. He is also delighted to welcome the new members and the expertise that they bring. “It is great to have such a broad range of expertise on our Council and we appreciate all of the time and effort that the members bring to our governing body. This is another expression of the strong volunteer element that is present in our school” he said.

Dr Bruno Mascitelli

www.vsl.vic.edu.au

2010 - 75th Anniversary Year