

Plain English Speaking Award

Held by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), the [Plain English Speaking Award](#) (PESA) is a public-speaking competition for students aged 15-18 years. It provides an excellent opportunity for students to extend their skills in oral communication, speech writing and research.

Presenting both a prepared and impromptu speech, students are required to speak clearly and convincingly in plain English on an issue that shows an awareness of the world beyond their immediate environment.

Tips for a successful speech

The best prepared speeches in PESA combine worldly issues with personal experiences, giving listeners a parcel of ideas that they may never have heard before.

Key components of a successful prepared speech:

- The subject matter should be worldly and should concern a social issue.
- The subject matter should be well constructed.
- The delivery must be convincing and engaging.
- The words of the speech must be in plain English.

For impromptu speeches, students have four minutes to respond to a prompt received on the day. Having the ability to confidently speak 'off the cuff' with little or no preparation time is a valuable skill.

Tips for a successful impromptu speech:

- Take time to brainstorm after getting the prompt, then choose one theme to focus on.
- Create a loose plan or structure, listing two or three related points.
- Draw on your life experiences and knowledge of the wider world/current issues.
- Have a strong ending – close on a decisive note.

Benefits of public speaking

1. Boost your self-esteem

Honing your skills in public speaking is a great way to build self-confidence. It is empowering to overcome anxieties, connect with audiences and feel you have valuable insights to share.

2. Bring your message to a wider audience

Not only do you strengthen your critical thinking skills through research and speech-drafting, you get to educate and inform people beyond your social circle on matters important to you.

3. Strengthen your communication skills

Learning how to use clear structure, engaging body language and concise expression to communicate effectively is a lifelong skill.

What do previous PESA participants say?

PESA provides students with a platform to challenge and excite minds from across Australia. It is a space for our voices to be heard.

—Luke Macaronas, 2016 Victorian State and National Winner and 2017 International Winner

The award was an experience unlike any other I have had. It has really inspired me to have my voice heard and enact change in the future.

—Fergus Dale, 2017 Victorian State Winner

The memories and lessons PESA has given me will serve me for years to come. It was an adventure that I loved, and one that I would recommend wholeheartedly.

—Samuel Roach, 2018 Victorian State Winner

PESA truly changed my life - not only did the event open up new doors for me that I never thought possible before, but it also taught me so much about myself. Participating in PESA was an experience I will treasure forever and never forget.

—An Dang, 2019 Victorian State Winner

Being a part of this competition has cemented in my mind the fact that this current generation has the capability to change the world. Just you wait.

—Tierney Khan, 2020 Victorian State Winner