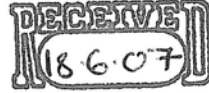




Australian Capital Territory
EDUCATION AND TRAINING



School Uniform Inquiry Submission 112

File Ref: 2007/00695

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Ms Ellingford

Thank you for your letter of 30 April 2007 to Dr Michele Bruniges requesting information to assist with the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms. Dr Bruniges has asked me to respond on her behalf.

Whilst the ACT Department of Education and Training does not have a mandatory uniform policy for students enrolled in ACT government schools ACT government primary and high schools have a dress code which generally takes the form of a uniform or colour code policy. ACT government senior secondary colleges however do not require students to follow a colour code, but expect a standard of dress which is acceptable in the workplace.

The current practice in ACT government schools regarding uniform and dress code is that individual schools, in consultation with their school board and community, develop their own policy that encourages students to wear school uniform in primary school, or to follow a particular dress or colour code in high school. These policies must be flexible enough to cater for all students and circumstances, and should also take health and safety standards into consideration. Schools Directors support school communities to encourage uniforms and dress codes.

School-based policies are informed by the *Education ACT 2004*, Chapter 3, Part 3.1 (a) "...the ACT government school system is based on the principles of equity, universality and non-discrimination and (b) government schools are free and open to everyone..."

The ACT Government provides support through a number of avenues to families of students who require financial assistance, including to purchase uniforms or clothing items that meet colour code. The Secondary Bursary Scheme provides \$500 per year to students whose parents hold Centrelink concession cards or health care cards. All government schools also receive Student Support Funds that can be used at the principal's discretion to support individual students. Using these funds, some schools supply students with items of clothing. Many schools also provide access to second hand uniform and clothing pools, to assist all students to meet the agreed dress code.

Specific financial assistance was provided to families who were required to change schools at the end of 2006, due to their school closing. This grant was used to purchase new uniforms in many cases.

ACT government schools are accommodating and inclusive, and will work closely with families to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to participate fully in the school programs. ACT government schools can also access a schools equity fund to provide extra support for students.

Some schools in the ACT order school uniforms, through their Parents and Citizens Association, directly from uniform suppliers, but all schools make their own arrangements. Some schools will provide uniforms or a discount to families requesting assistance or who are experiencing financial difficulties.

There are occasional instances where individual students and/ or parents refuse to comply with a school uniform or dress code policy, however an ACT student cannot be denied access to government schooling as a consequence of not complying with a school uniform or dress code policy. There are no formal departmental enforcement processes for non-compliance with a school uniform or dress code. Schools develop their own processes for encouraging students to comply with the school's policy on uniforms.

I hope you find this information useful. Please contact me on 02 6205 9172 if you require any further information. You may also access our Department's website at www.det.act.gov.au for further policy information.

Yours sincerely



Craig Curry
Executive Director

12/06/07