



Government of South Australia

Department of Education and
Children's Services

CE 2007/01671

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament of Victoria
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Dear Ms Ellingford

Thank you for your letter of 30 April 2007 regarding the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms. In response to your request for information I provide you with the following.

In South Australia, Part 77 of the *Education Regulations 1997* (Attachment 1) provides school governing councils with the right to determine school dress policy. Arising from the *Education Regulations 1997*, Section 3, Part 95 of the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) Administrative Instructions and Guidelines (Attachment 2) provides detailed information to schools in relation to school dress codes. The right for governing councils to determine a school dress policy enables schools to develop a consistent school identity, which in turn assists in the development of school pride.

In South Australia, all school uniform procurement must be undertaken in line with the DECS Procurement Framework. This Framework may be viewed at: http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/files/communities/docman/1/Procurement_Framework_k_V5.pdf. The DECS Procurement Unit are available to provide assistance to schools in procuring school uniforms, however the decision as to how school uniforms are supplied is a decision made by each individual school. For example, some DECS schools may have their own school uniform shop, while other DECS schools may encourage parents to purchase appropriate school uniform items from retail outlets or suppliers.

The provision of financial assistance to students and/or their families to enable them to purchase school uniforms is an individual school decision. Section 3, Part 95 of the DECS Administrative Instructions and Guidelines provides that schools must be aware of and sensitive to those students who may find it difficult to observe the school's dress code policy due to economic circumstances. Additionally, when making a decision about school dress code, governing councils must have regard to the cost of compliance and should endeavour to keep such costs as low as is practical. Section 3, Part 95 of the DECS Administrative Instructions and Guidelines provides some strategies that can be employed by schools to reduce dress code costs. It should also be noted that parents may seek an exemption from the school dress code on financial hardship grounds.

In relation to legal or other action arising from school uniforms or dress code policies, I am advised that there have been no examples of such action being instigated against DECS.

Part 77 (6) of the *Education Regulations 1997* provides that a school principal must enforce the school dress code (unless a student has been granted an exemption from the dress code) and may take appropriate disciplinary action in relation to a wilful and persistent breach of the dress code. However the school dress code may not be enforced by the suspension, exclusion or expulsion of a student nor may the student be precluded from participating in the educational program of the school. In addition, Section 3, Part 95 of the Administrative Instructions and Guidelines provides an appropriate enforcement process for schools to follow in response to instances of dress code non-compliance.

Across South Australia, DECS officers are aware of individual instances of school dress code non-compliance. In particular, there have been recent instances where students have not complied with a school dress code by having brightly coloured hair or facial piercings. These instances of non-compliance have been resolved at the school level by the principal, through negotiation with the student and their parents and where necessary, appropriate disciplinary action.

I trust that this information will be of assistance to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Chris Robinson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date:

6/6/07