

Response to the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee inquiry into dress codes and school uniforms in Victorian schools.

On behalf of the students, staff and parents of Heywood and District Secondary College I present our comments to the committee.

- School uniforms engender a sense of respect for self. They set a tone amongst students and in wearing them they reflect a sense of pride in one's own appearance, of being organised and self disciplined in preparations for the school day.
- School uniforms represent a pride in the school and what it represents in the broader community. Parents in particular feel strongly about the proud tradition of the school at the centre of our rural community and see the wearing of our school uniform as a constant reminder of this.
- The wearing of uniforms promotes cohesion of the student body as well as a sense of identity and belonging to a school community. It unites the student body, encouraging them to work together as a team to achieve both school and individual goals. And teaches students about the importance of dress code.
- School uniforms are a leveller in terms of socio economic background, since the issue of conforming to media and brand association are removed. Linked to this is the removal of peer pressure to conform to certain group's dress code in order to be accepted or "fit in". As our SRC president said "The school uniform is a good way of making students feel equal to their peers, they don't have to worry about having the best jeans or shoes, all students can come to school feeling comfortable that everyone wears the same outfit."
- There is some choice within our uniform to accommodate seasonal changes. Occasional changes to the style of uniform are made through the SRC and Uniform sub committee of school council.
- Our uniform also includes a hat as part of the school's Sunsmart policy. This is important in terms of the promotion of a safe and healthy school environment and the fostering of good habits outside of school.
- In terms of affordability, the school uniform is more cost effective than designer clothing. Our school runs a second hand uniform store and there is also access to the State School Relief Fund if the need arises.

Robyn Sutherland
Assistant Principal

2/5/07