

Merri Creek Primary

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27th May 2007

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and training Committee
Parliament House
Spring St
East Melbourne. 3002

Dear Ms Ellingford,

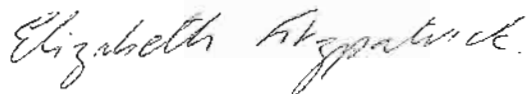
Re: Government Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms in Victoria Schools (S159–2007)

The School Council of Merri Creek Primary School in Fitzroy North gave consideration to the above Inquiry at its meeting of 16th May 2007. Based on that discussion, it is the considered view of the Council that the following points be presented to the Parliamentary Education and Training Committee as a submission for its consideration.

1. The School has some articles of clothing available for purchase by parents. This includes polo shirts, fleecy tops, and broad-brimmed hats. The School welcomes parents purchasing off-the-rack school clothing from major variety stores for their children to wear at school, if that is their wish.
2. Students wear a wide variety of clothing styles and brands here, including off-the-rack school clothing. There is broad acceptance among the students of a diversity in clothes, without any discernible competition or peer pressure occurring among them for particular brands or styles. Teachers welcome that diversity, and believe that the primary requirement of students clothing is that it ensures they will not come to any harm or danger at School on the day or in the longer term.
3. Although there may appear to be some ostensible appeal in students wearing a common style of clothing that might alleviate arguments between their parents and them about what to wear to school today, or might simplify their choices, or might identify the School to the general public, we believe that such reasons are neither sufficient or necessary for having a school uniform.
4. We see no need or requirement for mandating any schools uniforms in our School. Moreover, there has been no obvious demand in recent times from parents for this to be considered or implemented.

5. The School strongly fosters a culture of co-operative education that respects diversity of all kinds, encourages a harmonious relationship between teachers and students to be established and maintained throughout all grades, and cultivates self-discipline and responsibility in students
6. Any attempt to mandate a school uniform would require a major change in that culture. It is our belief that this would not bring any tangible benefits to parents, students, or teachers. Once a particular uniform was mandated, then it would be necessary to monitor and attempt to enforce that policy in a way that would significantly degrade the established and preferred relationship between students and teachers here. This requirement would also significantly distract teachers from their core teaching functions.
7. We also believe that a mandatory uniform policy, unless it was prohibitively restrictive in what constituted a uniform, could quite easily lead to students attempting to see how just far such a policy could be tested without being violated.
8. Finally, the implementation of a school uniform policy leaves unanswered what would or could the School do if students and/or parents chose to deliberately disregard it.

Yours faithfully,



Elizabeth Fitzpatrick
School Council President
Merri Creek Primary School