

4th May, 2007

Mr Geoff Howard MP
Chair
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
Melbourne Victoria 3002

Dear Sir,

We refer to Parliamentary Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms in Victorian Schools.

The Noone Group of Companies has successfully manufactured and supplied school uniforms for 60 years. We are one of very few organizations who supplies nationally. In that time, there have been many trends in both designs as well as the method of distribution.

The response of this document has been prepared by the Directors of T.D. Noone Group of Companies. All directors have been with the Noone Group for over 18 years.

Our response to this enquiry is specifically aimed at the list below.

- a) the benefits and costs of mandatory school uniforms
- b) the views of school communities about dress codes and uniforms
- c) the most cost efficient and practical uniform procurement arrangements
- g) national and international trends

The Noone Group currently employs over 80 staff and is one of the largest specialty uniform manufacturers in Australia. Our expertise in design and manufacturing school uniforms has seen the Noone Group supply over 1500 schools nationally with various schoolwear products.

If you require any further information ,please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Faithfully

Michael Farrugia
Managing Director

- a. Compulsory uniforms have significant benefits for schools in the following ways.

The image of schools is cohesive and clearly identifies the students who represent the school.

This would also assist the school administration in identifying anyone who should not be on the school site.

The safety of all students is paramount, therefore their uniform provides the best means of visual identification available.

Uniforms also remove the "peer group pressure" element from schools. All schools have students with various socio - economic circumstances. Therefore the students who can afford it, often wear the latest in fashion brands if given the choice. This has the potential to destroy the confidence and morale of the less fortunate students.

The cost of uniforms is often blamed as the reason for not having a compulsory uniform. The uniform industry has undergone significant restructuring of its manufacturing process in Australia over the past 10 years. This has led to many uniform items being produced overseas. It is common to see products now Made in China / Fiji / Indonesia / Vietnam. This has given school uniforms a new competitive edge, where the prices are significantly cheaper in real terms than ever before.

It must be said, there is still a perception by some people in the general school community that uniforms are over priced. This belief is baseless when it is expected that uniforms be worn on a daily basis and last several years before replacement. No other garments purchased for students within the fashion industry are designed or manufactured to perform to this level.

- b. There is a general feeling by student communities that the dress code has a positive effect on the overall image and discipline of schools.

In recent years, the Noone Group have designed new ranges for many government schools which were looking to enhance their overall image. This involved the provisions of a more "private school" appearance with the use of blazers, wool jumpers and ties taking pride of place.

It is evident, schools are using their image as part of their strategic marketing campaigns to attract new students. Given parents have a choice in deciding where to send their children to school (ie not zoned to a particular school), uniforms and the overall presentation of the schools have become integral to making their final decisions.

- c. There are three methods of uniform supply within the school uniform industry.

Option 1.

A retail schoolwear supplier provides a full uniform supply from a retail shop outside of the school grounds. From a practical sense, this would provide the school community with an extensive number of hours including Saturday trading for convenience.

There has been a perception that this method can be more expensive, given the overheads to run a full retail facility. However there are now a number of retailers who also have their own manufacturing / importing chains of supply. The Noone Group currently operate 4 retail stores in Victoria and supply over 40 schools from these sites.

Noone is competitive because of its manufacturing / importing expertise and the overall buying power it commands within the schoolwear market in Australia.

Option 2.

Schools operating and managing their own uniform shops.

Many of these on - campus shops commenced by selling second hand uniforms and then progressing to new items.

It is common to use inexperienced office / administration staff or volunteers to manage these stores. There has been a widely held view, that this is the most cost efficient method of uniform distribution especially when there are minimal overhead costs to provide this option.

However their inefficiencies in supply and stock management are prevalent in nearly all schools who provide this method of supply. Therefore , the overall financial benefit to the parents / students over option no 1 are not achieved, and in some case's parents are worse off.

We enclose a comparison of price lists from two government secondary colleges in the same region of Melbourne to highlight this anomaly. School "A" is managed by its own staff. School "B" is managed by a local manufacturer / retailer. It is very easy to see that parents are significantly worse off and also the level of service is questionable given the shop is only open for 5 hours per week. In comparison the retail outlet is open for over 50 hours per week .

It must be noted that it is necessary to hold significant levels of stock to supply a school with all the products and complete size range to fit the broader school community. It is common for secondary colleges to hold from \$60,000 - \$100,000 at any time of the year.

From a financial point of view, it must be asked whether these funds should be spent in providing better education facilities within the school, especially when the parents are not deriving any real cost savings and most schools make little or no profits from their retail endeavours.

Additionally, many school uniform shop's are poorly located within the school and are inadequately fixtured. Whilst it may be convenient for students to purchase their own uniforms, there is still a significant proportion of parents who would wish to make purchases. This would necessitate the parents coming onto the school campus and therefore this could compromise the overall security of the students at the school.

How does a school adequately identify and distinguish between a possible threat to the safety of the students from a typical customer or intruder?

Option 3.

Schools providing a retail facility on – campus and have an independent contractor to operate the retail store.

There has been a growing trend to adopt this method over the past 5 years. There are many advantages to the school.

Firstly, there is no cost outlay or risk to the school regarding stock holding. All overhead costs such as wages and insurance are covered by the contractor. Most contractors are affiliated with manufacturers and importers therefore their competitiveness is assured.

The “on – campus” retail store is managed professionally therefore providing a well presented and efficient operation.

Normally, contractors would provide a rebate back to the school for the use of school facilities. These are generally calculated from a proportion of gross sales (approximately 5 – 10% rebates generally apply).

This method of supply is the most cost effective if the contractor is a manufacturer / and importer. To some extent, the buying power of larger suppliers may also have an advantage.

G) Trends. The Noone Group is a national supplier as well as an exporter to Pacific countries such as New Zealand / Fiji / Papua New Guinea.

The trends in all areas are to adopt compulsory uniforms and in general bring them closer in line to private schools.

This is especially recognised with the number of Government Secondary Colleges adopting ties / blazers etc and the overall formal image.

The market place for attracting students has become very competitive over the past decade.

It is a statistical fact that the private schools have achieved significant growth in numbers of students over the past 10 years, whilst the Government sector has struggled for any growth at all. This has seen Government schools attempt to lift all facets of their profile. Obviously uniforms are only one part of the overall profile, but this has been one method used by many Government schools to lift their image to attract as many students as possible.

SCHOOL "A"

UNIFORM PRICE LIST

(Including GST)

1 September 2006 – 30 June 2007

BOYS' UNIFORM

* Blazer	\$190.00	Sizes 12 - 22
	\$205.00	Men's size
Grey School Trousers	\$ 45.00	
Grey Walk Shorts	\$ 38.00	
* White Business Shirt with College logo (long sleeve)	\$ 22.00	
* White Business Shirt with College logo (short sleeve)	\$ 20.00	
* Navy Jumper	\$ 81.00	Sizes 8 - 16
	\$ 85.00	Sizes 18 - 24
	\$ 89.00	Sizes 26 - 30
* Tie - new with logo	\$ 22.00	
* Red Jumper Year 10	\$ 89.00	

GIRLS' UNIFORM

* Blazer (Girl's Styling)	\$190.00	Sizes 12 - 20
Navy school pants (not flared or hipsters)	\$ 45.00	
Dress	\$ 69.00	Sizes 8 - 14
	\$ 77.00	16 - 28
Winter Skirt	\$ 68.00	Sizes 8 - 20
* White Business Shirt with College logo (long sleeve)	\$ 22.00	
* White Business Shirt with College logo (short sleeve)	\$ 20.00	
* Navy Jumper	\$ 81.00	Sizes 8 - 16
	\$ 85.00	Sizes 18 - 24
	\$ 89.00	Sizes 26 - 30
* Tie - new with logo	\$ 22.00	
* Red Jumper Year 10	\$ 89.00	

SPORTS UNIFORM

* Gold Polo Sports Shirt	\$ 32.00	
* Sports Rugby Top	\$ 70.00	
** Plain Navy tracksuit pants		
** Plain Navy sports shorts		

SCHOOL BAGS

* School bags - Spartan Lite Pack with logo (optional)	\$ 58.00	
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(Subject to price change)

* Only available from The Uniform Shop at

** Navy sport shorts and plain navy tracksuit pants are not stocked at available at various retail stores

College but...

The Uniform Shop is open on Fridays ONLY: 8.30 to 9.15am and 12.45 to 4.00pm



Internationally Accredited

Official Uniform Supplier to
SCHOOL " B "
BOYS & GIRLS PRICE LIST VALID TO 30TH JUNE 2008

<u>GIRLS</u>	<u>BOYS</u>
Blazer 80 – 85 – 90 95 – 100 – 105 110 – 115 – 120	Blazer 80 – 85 – 90 95 – 100 – 105 110 – 115 – 120
Spray Jacket All Sizes	Spray Jacket All Sizes
Pullover (With Monogram) 80 – 85 – 90 - 95 100 – 105 - 110 115 – 120	Pullover (With Monogram) 80 – 85 – 90 - 95 100 – 105 - 110 115 – 120
VCE Pullover (With Monogram) 80 – 85 – 90 - 95 100 – 105 - 110 115 – 120	VCE Pullover (With Monogram) 80 – 85 – 90 - 95 100 – 105 - 110 115 – 120
Summer/Winter Skirt 8 – 10 12 – 14 16 – 18 20 – 22	Shirts (With Logo for Girls and Boys) S/S All sizes L/S All sizes
Summer Dresses 8-10-12 14-16-18 20-22-24	Trousers (Grey /Poly/Visc, Noone/Surrey Brand) Youths Sizes Men's Sizes
Girls Slacks 6-14 16-24	Trousers (Grey /Poly/Visc, Tee Dee Brand) Youths Sizes Men's Sizes
Summer Blouse S/S (With Logo Girls only) Winter Blouse L/S (With Logo Girls only)	Shorts (Grey) Youths Mens
Or Shirts (With Logo for Girls and Boys) S/S All sizes L/S All sizes	3 Pack Socks (Grey calf length cotton socks) All sizes
Tights (Navy Cotton/Nylon) Girls Sizes Ladies Sizes	School Bag (LT pak large) Tie (Striped)
Tights (Navy Microfibre) Girls Sizes Ladies Sizes	BOYS & GIRLS SPORTS UNIFORM
Socks (White Knee hi) All sizes	Sport Polo Top (Micromesh with logo) All Sizes
3 Pack Socks (White calf length cotton socks) All sizes	Sports Shorts (Microfibre) All Sizes
School Bag (for boys & girls) Bucket Hat (With Logo) Tie (Striped)	Tracksuit Pants (Microfibre) All Sizes
	Sports Sox (white ankle) All Sizes

Trading hours
Mon – Fri: 9am till 5.30pm Sat: 9am till 2pm