

The Education and Training Committee Inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms in Victorian Schools

The Port Melbourne Primary School Parents and Friends Association seeks to provide a statement to the Education and Training Committee inquiring into this matter.

Benefits and cost of mandatory school uniforms

- Uniforms are more cost effective for families
- Compulsory uniforms should be cost effective for a range of families within socio-economic groupings
- The designated uniform range includes pieces that cater for different financial capacity within families

View of the school community about dress codes and school uniforms

- The PFA is in strong favour of compulsory, standardised school uniforms
- We believe that such an approach enhances school pride and provides cohesion among the students
- Uniforms enable easier identification of students (on excursions and within the school grounds), which assists staff in their duty of care.
- Uniforms prevent competition between students on dress style and fashion and they reduce the problem of expensive clothing items at school

Most cost efficient and practical uniform procurement arrangements

- We recognise procurement of uniforms can be very a slow process and potentially poses a financial burden for the school to avoid this by having stock available
- We would be concerned about procurement being assigned to any non-school organisation that operates as a profit-making venture and does not return revenue to the school community.
- The PFA sees a possible role for itself as the representative of the families in facilitating uniform supply in an efficient and cost-effective manner but is limited by resources (time, space, financial capacity to fund start-up costs)

Anti-discrimination and Health Promotion Policies

- We believe the uniform should be adapted to cater for any differences surrounding religious or gender diversities providing it does not interfere with safety guidelines
- The uniform should be in line with recommended health precautions (closed toe shoes; wide-brimmed hats for sun protection, shirts with collars for sun protection)
- School bag should be back-pack style to enable students to distribute the weight of their belongings in a manner that protects their bodies

Appropriate enforcement and sanction

- The PFA favours adopting a positive, proactive approach to encouraging students to wear the uniform in line with the school guidelines

- Within the school grounds, we hope the staff are able to share the responsibility of helping students to take pride in the uniform
- We do not think it is reasonable to exclude students from activities within the school grounds if their uniform is not compliant
- We believe it is helpful to encourage people to donate second-hand or unused school uniforms to a pool that can be drawn upon if children need replacement items
- In order to better represent the school, we believe children should not be allowed to represent the school if they are not in appropriate uniform. We believe this consequence encourages children to respect their uniform and fosters school pride.

Appropriate exemption criteria and processes

- Although we strongly favour the uniform, we also recognise that circumstances arise that make it very difficult for some families to provide prescribed uniforms.
- In these situations, the PFA believes the school community should have a process to support these families so that the children do not face any adverse disciplinary or social consequences.
- The school already provides assistance in the form of donated uniforms for such children and we believe in this approach

National and International trends

- We believe uniforms generally should be compatible with national trends in children's clothing (ie: simple, functional, hardwearing; gender neutral options)