

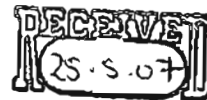
School Uniform Inquiry Submission 44



23/4/

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Department of
Education, Training and the Arts



Dear Ms Ellingford

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April 2007 regarding your request for information to assist the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into dress codes and school uniforms.

Many school communities see significant benefits for students in the implementation of a student dress code policy. These benefits include the fostering of group identity, the link between dress standards, school discipline and school spirit, and community perceptions of the school. A school's dress code also assists in terms of safety because it clearly identifies students and creates equity by clarifying what all students should wear.

During the consultation phase for the implementation of the new Education Act in Queensland, principals and their relevant associations raised the issue of whether school uniforms should be compulsory. The legislation was previously silent on the matter of school uniforms. The departmental policy at the time, stated that schools could set a school uniform policy in consultation with the school's parents and citizens (P&C) association. However, there were some questions about principals' power to do this. It was proposed to insert new provisions into the legislation that would enable principals in consultation with the school community to set a uniform policy. This would also allow principals to enforce this by imposing appropriate sanctions. It was agreed that an approved uniform policy would assist in terms of safety as it provides an identifying mechanism for the students of a particular school and creates equity by clarifying what should be worn by all students.

Consequently, sections 360–363 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* now authorises state school principals to develop a student dress code policy, including appropriate sanctions. Sanctions can be applied on a once only basis per episode of non-compliance. A full copy of the Act is available on the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel website at www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/ACTS/2006/06AC039.pdf. When developing student dress codes, schools are required to comply with the departmental policy, available online at www.education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/students/smspr022/.

The Queensland Government *Code of Practice* on employment and outwork obligations – textile clothing and footwear suppliers applies to all contracts for the supply of textile, clothing, footwear and related goods and components to government agencies. The code is available online at www.deir.qld.gov.au/industrial/law/codes/textiles/index.htm. Additional instructions regarding purchasing arrangements are provided through the department's policy on *Purchasing Textile Clothing and Footwear* which is available online at www.education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/finance/fnmpr004/.

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The purchase of uniforms is not generally managed by the school but by the P&C which operate uniform shops. Where the P&C does not manage the purchase of uniforms the school is required to take responsibility. In addition, Regional Sports Boards also undertake some purchasing of sports uniforms. Irrespective of who manages the purchasing arrangements, all are required to comply with the department's policy and the Queensland Government's *Code of Practice*.

The Queensland Government does not provide a school uniform allowance to assist parents in the purchase of school uniforms for students. Dress codes are required to be reasonable and therefore, readily accessible and affordable to the school community. Where a parent is unable to afford to purchase items of the student dress code, the school would need to support the child in accessing the required items to ensure that the child is not disadvantaged due to economic hardship. Usually, through the P&C, schools have a bank of uniforms that can be accessed in cases of financial hardship.

I am advised that my department does not have any record of any formal legal or other action taken arising from school uniform or dress code policy since the implementation of the new Act.

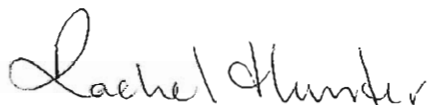
Schools with dress codes can impose sanctions if students are not wearing the uniform. Sanctions are limited to detention for a student during lunch or after school, or preventing the student from attending, or participating in any activity which is not an essential school educational program or where the student is representing the school. A student cannot be suspended, excluded or have their enrolment cancelled for not wearing the school uniform. In their dress code, schools articulate the consequences and management processes for students who do not follow the dress code. Consequences vary from school to school as determined by the school principal in consultation with the school community.

In cases where students are failing to comply with the school dress code, principals are required to develop a system that provides: exemption processes for students; alternative arrangements for a set period of time upon receipt of a written request from a parent; and opportunities to wear relevant items of dress code from a bank of items held at school. These are school-based issues and are managed at the local level.

Should you require any further information regarding the implementation of student dress codes in Queensland state schools, you can contact Ms Suzi Barbir, Senior Executive Officer, School Resourcing and Administration, by email at suzi.barbir@deta.qld.gov.au or on telephone (07) 3237 1122.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Hunter
Director-General

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