

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring St
EAST MELBOURNE 3002

29 May, 2007

Dear Ms Ellingford,

I write in reference to the Government inquiry into Dress Codes and School Uniforms in Victorian Schools, on behalf of the Rowville Secondary College School Council.

In 2006 our college through its Policy and Planning committee undertook our cyclical review of the college student dress code. As a result of the input received from our school community, School Council confirmed at its October meeting that “the wearing of College uniform by all students is compulsory in response to the strong and clear preference of parents and the community for such a policy.”

The views of our school community are that a college uniform:

- Creates a strong sense of college identity both within the college and the community
- Creates equal opportunity for all students and prevents social or class distinction
- Most appropriately enables the college to meet appropriate health and safety standards and obligations
- Maintains financial equality for parents

Our College Council strongly supports the status quo arrangements for local decision-making in regard to school uniform. Whilst with the advice and guidance of our community we have adopted a particular view, we acknowledge the right of other communities to adopt a different position.

A copy of our Student Dress Code is included for your information and interest and you will note that we have incorporated the following broad areas:

1. Purpose
2. Guidelines incorporating College Uniform Requirements
3. Implementation including procedures in the event that a student is temporarily unable to wear the uniform, as well as procedures in the event that a legitimate reason requires a student's family to seek a uniform exemption
4. Responsibility of school employees in the support of the policy
5. Evaluation

It also needs to be explained that Rowville Secondary College provides a sound safety net structure for those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. A budget is allocated to support the students in these circumstances and is administered supportively by our Student Welfare Coordinators. The College would also like to acknowledge the support provided by State Schools Relief and would support greater levels of direct funding from government to ensure that educational funding is used to enable equality of opportunity for students at school. Educational funding direct to parents does not always provide certainty that the use will be for the intended purpose.

Our School Council further believes that when a local community has determined its stance on uniform it is perfectly reasonable that provided appropriate exemption policies and support structures are in place, it is appropriate that support for the college policy should be a condition of enrolment. Too much time expended debating the uniform takes resources away from the core educational business – students and their learning. To this end we believe it essential that Department of Education bureaucracies support the locally determined uniform policy and refrain from action or comments that can create misunderstandings within the community.

We thank you for providing the opportunity to comment and for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely

Glenn H Fankhauser
Executive Officer
Rowville Secondary College School Council