



TALLANGATTA SECONDARY COLLEGE

Big enough to deliver, small enough to care

31 May 2007

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street, East Melbourne 3002

Dear Karen,

I write on behalf of Tallangatta Secondary College School Council to express our formal comment on the inquiry into dress codes and school uniforms in Victorian schools.

The terminology used when discussing this issue is critical. Before I make some general comments, can I state that it is our firm opinion that the responsibilities of school uniform should remain the decision of school councils under school governance policies. School uniform is a reflection on the school community and needs to be a collective decision. In general:

- School uniform should allow for choice and not discriminate. This can be achieved by providing families a range of approved items at various costs.
- Mandatory school uniform, set by school council, provides students with a sense of belonging and addresses safety issues. Costs to parents can be kept to a minimum as suppliers are only ordering in approved items of uniform.
- Uniforms or dress codes should not be mandated by external organisations to school councils.
- Our school community views school uniforms as important. There has been consultation over the years to ensure the uniform is practical and is accessible to all families.
- School councils have taken a proactive role in incorporating measures to reduce the risk of skin cancer through uniforms. The inclusion of optional long-sleeved polo shirts is providing further options for parents to take in line with health and safety.
- In exceptional circumstances, our school provides students with items of uniform at a reduced or no cost to ensure all students are in uniform. This is a local exemption process that is viewed as very supportive and acknowledges individual needs.
- Where a student is not in full school uniform, a question needs to be asked. Is the student being defiant? Is there a personal reason the student is not in uniform? Generally, the latter applies. We treat any students not in full uniform as a wellbeing issue. Students are supported in a sensitive manner to ensure they are in uniform for the day.
- Parent opinion of uniform policy and its implementation is very positive. They value the efforts of the school in providing clear and consistent guidelines that supports all students.

I would be happy to give further comments if required.

Yours sincerely

Albert Freijah
Principal

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