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Subject Inquiry into School Uniforms

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Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your enquiry.

At the outset, I would make the point that it is the person within the clothing that is important. We need to be very careful that the issue of uniform does not detract from the essential nature of teacher-student relationships and the care for the individual. Too often, the managing of uniform becomes a power issue between older (adults/teachers) people and younger people. The young person is the loser because the core goal of learning gets lost in the ensuing conflicts and emotions.

This response is a personal one. I acknowledge that the central focus outlines about is College policy and supported by all, there would be individuals and groups who may argue different opinions including providing strong support for some uniform.

I have followed the question set out in the letter from Steve Herbert, MP for Eltham and our valued local member.

Who should decide the dress code for schools?

The school community of students, parents and school personnel but within the context of the vision and strategic directions for the school.

Should Uniforms be compulsory for all school?

No. We are not a police state. It is a matter for individual school decision.

Governments should be much more concerned about the relevance of schools and the culture of schools supporting the growth of student talent than wasting time and diverting attention by signaling out such a trivial issue.

Should there be one uniform for the State?

We want Victoria to develop as an innovative State offering future exciting job prospects. This notion belongs to a factory mentality of the past.

Uniform should also not be allowed to discriminate on the grounds of religion, culture or socio-economic status. Cultural or religious clothing or parts of clothing need always to be permitted. Further, we should not allow emotion associated with what might be happening in other countries to reduce our belief in the important multi-cultural base to our community.

Should uniforms apply to VCE students?

It certainly would be a step in the right direction to foster a policy that says Years 10-12 are young adults and we should move from treating them as children by dressing them up in uniform.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of compulsory uniforms?

Fundamentally, uniform can reduce the dignity and integrity of the individual. It reduces an emphasis on differentiated learning and customizing curriculum because it values uniformity. It gives adults an excuse to overlook the individual and their needs for a differentiated learning program. Notions of 'protection', 'security', 'non-competitive' are

a nonsense! Schools should be about helping individuals develop the knowledge, understanding, resilience and strategies to deal with life's issues not hide them in a uniform.

How should dress codes be enforced? What sanctions should apply?

They shouldn't be and none. The very notion is draconian and about control rather than releasing the enormous potential of young people.

Exemption?

It should not be an issue. At the very least, it should be an individual family decision.

Shops?

If there are uniforms, then they should be available at the most convenient for families and the most cost-effective for schools.

We are in the 21st century. We give young people freedom of the mind through their use of technology and the enormity of their access to immediate information and communication through ICT. However, we try then to control them in 20th century methods and enforcing a "Dickensian" uniform policy is a prime example of this.

I need to add that we have uniform. We try to create a reasonably relaxed attitude to it and provide options. Our culture will not allow uniform to take precedence over the importance of the student.

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