



Our Ref: BNE3414291

10 September 2018

██████████
Executive Director
Independent Schools Queensland
PO Box 957
SPRING HILL QLD 4000

By email: ██████████

Dear ██████████

Equal Opportunity within School Uniform Codes

You may be aware that in July 2018 the Queensland Government announced it would be implementing a policy that all Queensland state schools provide uniform options, including shorts and pants, in all uniform categories for all students, regardless of gender.

A copy of that policy is attached.

The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland applauds the Government's policy as we believe it is consistent with a non-discriminatory approach and with emerging community expectations and standards. I am writing to you to encourage all independent non-Government schools in Queensland to consider implementation of a similar uniform code.

As well as dealing with possible contraventions of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*, the Commission supports the view that having a range of uniform options inclusive of students from diverse backgrounds and circumstances will be beneficial for a range of reasons.

Research has shown that the requirement for girls to wear dresses or skirts to school results in girls engaging in less physical activity throughout the day¹. Allowing a range of uniform options may have flow on health benefits for female students.

The availability of more gender neutral uniform options may also encourage girls to try subjects otherwise dominated by boys such as woodwork, technology and engineering and give them the confidence and experience to expand their choice of careers, with the myriad opportunities that follow. The availability of a range of uniform options for girls may help remove gender stereotypes that can develop from a young age.

School leaders who recognise and place a value on diversity through uniform codes send a significant message to students and the broader community on the importance of inclusive values.

¹ Norrish, H., Farridgdon, F., Bulsara, M & Hands, B. (2012). The effect of school uniform on incidental physical activity among 10-year-old children. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport & Physical Education*, 3(1), 51-63

The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland has received complaints and enquiries about discrimination based on the lack of uniform options for girls and students from diverse backgrounds. Although there have been no decided cases to date in Queensland on this issue, a policy of not allowing girls to wear pants or shorts in a co-educational school may be grounds for a complaint of sex or gender identity discrimination in education. Inclusive schools uniforms may also be important for students from various religions, including Muslim, Jewish and Sikh students.

Of course, it would be preferable if school uniform policies were developed so that dealing with formal discrimination complaints could be avoided. Individual students seeking a special dispensation from uniform requirements on a case by case basis, should also be avoided wherever possible. These processes can be disruptive and upsetting for all involved, particularly students at an impressionable, vulnerable and important stage of their lives, who may be struggling with confusion about their identity or body shape.

I hope you agree that, quite apart from the law, a compelling reason for change is the special role schools have in shaping inclusive views within young minds and dismantling those stereotypes which limit the ability for children and young people to thrive through equal opportunity.

Thank you for considering these important issues. I look forward to hearing back from you in relation to this letter. I would be happy to meet or for you to call me to discuss this further. I can be contacted through my Executive Assistant, Coral Logan at Coral.Logan@adcq.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Neroli Holmes
Acting Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Queensland

Encl: Student dress code



Our Ref: BNE3414291

10 September 2018

[REDACTED]
Executive Director
Queensland Catholic Education Commission
GPOI Box 2441
BRISBANE QLD 4001

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Equal Opportunity within School Uniform Codes

You may be aware that in July 2018 the Queensland Government announced it would be implementing a policy that all Queensland state schools provide uniform options, including shorts and pants, in all uniform categories for all students, regardless of gender.

A copy of that policy is attached.

The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland applauds the Government's policy as we believe it is consistent with a non-discriminatory approach and with emerging community expectations and standards. I am writing to you to encourage consideration of a similar uniform code in all Catholic Education schools in Queensland.

As well as dealing with possible contraventions of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*, the Commission supports the view that having a range of uniform options inclusive of students from diverse backgrounds and circumstances will be beneficial for a range of reasons.

Research has shown that the requirement for girls to wear dresses or skirts to school results in girls engaging in less physical activity throughout the day¹. Allowing a range of uniform options may have flow on health benefits for female students.

The availability of more gender neutral uniform options may also encourage girls to try subjects otherwise dominated by boys such as woodwork, technology and engineering and give them the confidence and experience to expand their choice of careers, with the myriad opportunities that follow. The availability of a range of uniform options for girls may help remove gender stereotypes that can develop from a young age.

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