Date

Dear Education Minister Hon. John Gardner**,**

**Re: Girls uniform choices in state schools**

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I understand how many letters you receive, and how busy you are.

I am writing to you about [an issue that I feel passionately about, and one that impacts on the education of every girl in this country; school uniform options for girls. **– adapt this for how you would like it to read].**

Many schools in Australia allow girls to wear a range of uniform options, choosing between dresses, skirts, shorts and pants. However, a surprisingly large number do not allow girls this choice, and require female students to wear a dress or skirt to school. This is even more pronounced in high school.

I am sure you can appreciate that for some girls (and their parents), this is problematic.

This issue is important to me because………[**write your story here. Why do you care about this? Were you affected personally? Was your child/niece/cousin affected? Are you concerned as a women, a man who believes in the rights of children and girls? Discuss here, and try to keep it brief. They won’t want to read an overly long letter].**

The Department for Education and Child Development School Dress Code Policy states that “the issue of gender incorporates the notion of girls having a right to choose. Girls should have a right to choose clothing, and to choose clothing to allow for freedom of movement, level of comfort, for safety and in consideration of climatic factors, and specific circumstances such as pregnancy. An inflexible dress code policy based on sex could be in breach of the Equal Opportunity Act”.

I am sure you are aware that the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission identified school uniforms as an area where schools could be open to legal challenges, and stated that "requiring female students to wear dresses instead of pants may amount to direct discrimination”.

Girls deserve to be comfortable and safe at school. Adding a girls’ formal shorts and shirt and long pants option, alongside the boys’ formal shorts and shirt and long pants option, can fulfil these requirements and enhance equity for girls at school. Similarly, making the unisex sports uniform of shorts and polo shirt acceptable wear for each gender every day would also meet these requirements.

As South Australia has branded itself as the state of wellbeing, allowing girls choice in what they wear to school would appear to directly support this notion. Certainly, forcing girls who do not want to wear them into dresses and skirts would serve to undermine their wellbeing.

As I’m sure you are aware a national group, Girls’ Uniform Agenda (see www.girlsuniformagenda.org), have made great strides in bringing this issue to public attention. Through their campaigning, the Western Australian, Victorian, Queensland and New South Wales governments have changed their respective state Student Dress Codes to add that shorts and pants must be offered to all girls as part of the uniform policy. I would like to see a similar change enacted in the SA education uniform policy document. The SA representative of Girls’ Uniform Agenda, Dr Sarah Cohen-Woods, is keen to work with the Education Department to make these changes (email: enquiries@girlsuniformagenda.org).

I am saddened that this discrimination is allowed to continue in schools. This letter is to request [**state here what you would like to happen. Do you want a meeting with the Minister or one of her representatives in the Department for Education? Do you want a written response outlining answers to your concerns? Ask for a clear, detailed response.]**

I know that you support the rights of girls to have an education free from discrimination, and I look forward to hearing from you the ways in which the South Australian government plan to support the rights of girls in schools.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Name**

**Position** - let them know your influence here. Are you a coach? On a P&C? An academic? A public health official? Do you write or speak in the media? Are you a blogger?

**Contact details (email, address, phone number)**.