Date

Dear Education Minister Hon Jeremy Rockliff,

**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].**

In Tasmania, the *Anti-**Discrimination Act 1998,*states that direct discrimination takes place if a person treats another person on the basis of any prescribed attribute less favourably than a person without that attribute or characteristic. The Act clearly states that a person cannot discriminate against another due to gender. While girls are not afforded the option of wearing the shorts and long pants that the boys beside them are able to wear, one could argue that this is an example of direct discrimination.

It is difficult to find a clear position of the Tasmanian government on school uniforms. Perhaps direct inclusion of the legislative requirements of schools in a school uniform policy from the Department of Education that supports choice for female students, would lead to better outcomes in this area in schools.

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”.

Adding a girls’ formal shorts and shirt and long pants option, alongside the boys’ formal shorts and shirt and long pants option can remove this discrimination 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 requirements.

You may be aware of a national group, Girls’ Uniform Agenda (see www.girlsuniformagenda.org), who have made great strides in bringing this issue to public attention. Through their campaigning, the Western Australian government has changed the WA Education Department’s Student Dress Code 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 Tasmanian education uniform policy document. The Tasmanian representative of Girls’ Uniform Agenda, Dr Diane Caney, 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 his representatives in the** Department of 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 and women, and I look forward to hearing from you the ways in which the Tasmanian government, and the Department of Education 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)**.