Date

Dear Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development and Minister for Women Hon. Yvette Barry,

**Re: Girls uniform choices in [state/private/Catholic/all] 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].**

I am aware that Education Directorate’s Dress Standard and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools policy and guidelines, state that:

* school based uniform policies should promote freedom of choice for all students by categorising options by clothing type rather than by gender, for example, shorts, trousers, skirts, rather than boy's uniform/ girl's uniform;
* of the items which a school designates as a school uniform, limiting a student's choice of school uniform items to dress in due to gender may infringe the ACT Discrimination Act (1991); and
* uniforms should provide all students with equal access to the full range of school activities.

It would seem to me that this statement in the policy document means that schools need to provide girls with the option of wearing shorts and long pants, among other choices. I would argue that girls will only feel free to do this if shorts and pants are a mandated part of the regular everyday girls’ uniform, and not included as the “boys” option.

Surely all girls, in all state schools, deserve to have the option of shorts and pants as their formal uniform. The Education Directorate’s policy appears to support this position, so I am curious as to why all schools are not required to follow this policy?

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”.

In addition 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 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 ACT’s education uniform policy document. The ACT representative of Girls’ Uniform Agenda, Amy Blain, is keen to work with the Education Department to make these changes (email: amy.l.blain@gmail.com).

I am saddened that this discrimination in girls’ school uniforms 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 Education Directorate? Do you want a written response outlining answers to your concerns? Would you like her/her office to contact the school you have this issue with? Ask for a clear, detailed response.]**

I know that you support the rights, and the education, of girls and women, and I look forward to hearing from you the ways in which the ACT government, and the Education Directorate, 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)**.