Date

Dear Minister for Women Hon Tanya Davies,

**Re: The right of girls to have appropriate uniform choices in 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 rights 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, as 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 of Education and Communities School Uniform Policy and Guidelines state that a school uniform should:

* cater for all students in the school community in a manner sensitive to gender and local cultural and social issues including cultural and religious diversity;
* meet requirements of occupational health and safety, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation;
* provide girls and boys with equal access to the full range of school activities;
* The implications of equal opportunity legislation are such that uniforms must enable both sexes to participate actively and safely in school life.

It could be argued that requiring girls to wear dresses and skirts limits their ability to access all the benefits of their education and access the full range of school activities; a restriction that is not placed on male students. As the above is the policy of the Department of Education and Communities, I am surprised that there are any state schools that are able to refuse choice to female students.

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.

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”.

I am saddened that this discrimination is allowed to continue in schools. I wanted to ensure you were aware of this issue, and the fact that the rights of girls are being overlooked in state schools across the state, as I know that once aware you would do all you can to support change in this area.

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 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 NSW education uniform policy document. The NSW representative of Girls’ Uniform Agenda, Alison Boston, is keen to work with the Education Department to make these changes (email: nsw@girlsuniformagenda.org).

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? 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 believe that they should receive equitable treatment within educational institutions. If you could discuss this issue with the Minister for Education, and work toward finding a solution that supports girls in schools, that would be a wonderful way to demonstrate your commitment to the rights of our girls.

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)**.