Date

Dear Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Hon Dianne Farmer,

**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].**

Despite the fact that it is clearly stated in the Department of Education and Training (DET) policy that "student dress codes offer gender neutral uniform options for all students", some schools are still not doing this. Forcing girls into skirts and dresses, in many cases when the students themselves do not want this, is not upholding this DET 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”.

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 the CEO of Our Watch Mary Barry wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald on the 28th of March, 2017, “Continuing to enforce limiting clothing regulations on girls is one of many ways they are reminded of their unequal status. It is seemingly "small" issues like this that, taken together, create a broader landscape of gender inequality across our society. Further, from our work at Our Watch, we know that the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that one of the results of widespread gender inequality is high levels of disrespect and violence against women. That should be reason enough to start challenging these kinds of gender stereotypes. But we can change this – a refreshing new approach to uniforms is just one example of how small changes can have a big impact, helping to break down restrictive stereotypes and enabling all children to be free to discover the world without unnecessary barriers. What better place to start than in schools? And what better time than now?”

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 QLD’s education uniform policy document. The QLD representative and cofounder of Girls’ Uniform Agenda, Amanda Mergler, is keen to continue working with the Education Department to make these changes (email: qld@girlsuniformagenda.org).

You can see from Mary Barry’s statement that the issue of school uniforms, and the requirement that girls wear skirts and dresses, is directly related to your portfolio. 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)**.