



SCHOOL UNIFORMS **FACTSHEET**

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Uniforms can present a structural barrier for some transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse and intersex students, especially when schools have gendered dress-codes. These may inadvertently (or sometimes explicitly) require students to comply with a dress code that is at odds with their gender.

This is a particular issue when a gendered dress code is based on the legal sex marker on a student's record student record, rather than a student's identified gender.

Such requirements can establish a negative association with administrative interactions and can mean that students are less likely to engage with their school, or are more likely to perceive the school as a hostile environment.

Importantly, uniform policies that require students to present in a way that is incongruous with their gender may not comply with existing Federal and ACT anti-discrimination legislation.

Wearing incongruous uniform options can make students feel deeply uncomfortable, acutely distressed or may even be something the student is unable to engage in altogether, impacting their ability to be present, engaged, and supported at school.

WHAT GUIDANCE ALREADY EXISTS?

In the Australian Capital Territory, all government schools are required to have a school uniform policy that does not place any gendered requirements or restrictions on items of the school uniform.

This is specified in more detail in the ACT Education Directorate's Dress Standard and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools Guideline

Non-government schools have a range of approaches to uniforms, and subsequently diverse policies, so it is important to check what is available at your school.

HOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

Options should be available across all school uniforms including sports uniforms and swimwear. Loose-fitting options and options with more coverage such as rash shirts and board shorts (to wear with swimmers) should be included.

Visit our factsheet **SCHOOL SPORTS AND CARNIVALS** for more guidance on sports and PE.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the school's uniform policy and related guidelines allow for a range of uniform items that can be worn by all students, irrespective of their gender?
- Are students provided with various uniform options that account for a range of needs and preferences (accessibility, mobility, comfort, gender)?
- Is cultural and religious diversity in the school community reflected and accommodated in the uniform policy (i.e. hijab, turbans, kippah and other head coverings, rosaries and other religious jewellery, cultural practices such as bindi, braids, locs, mehndi etc.)?
- Are students supported to wear uniform options that are comfortable and appropriate?
- If your school does not have a uniform, is the dress-code inclusive and affirmative of the needs of transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse, intersex, disabled, culturally diverse and religious students?



DRESS STANDARDS AND UNIFORMS IN CANBERRA PUBLIC SCHOOLS POLICY

References: ACT Government, Education Directorate (2016) 'Dress Standards and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools Policy', Online: education.act.gov.au