



Commission for Gender Equality  
A society free from gender oppression and inequality

## Media Release

**For Immediate release: 15 February 2022**

**To: Editors, Producers and Reporters**

Department of Basic Education must employ a non-discrimination principle in its [National Guidelines on School Uniforms](#)

The reopening of schools in South Africa has brought to the fore the need for a finalized *National Guideline on School Uniforms* that employs a human rights perspective and approach in order to protect Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) students from bullying and deprivation of equal access to education.

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) wishes to congratulate the department for employing an approach that centers accessibility and affordability. However, the lack of a human rights approach does little to address the homophobic environment within South African schools. Homophobia in South African schools can no longer be tolerated and ignored.

Occurrences of homophobic bullying are rampant in South African schools, in an article reported in the [Sunday Times](#), a 17-year-old student was subjected to bullying in the form of name calling and being subjected to being told by a teacher that “same-sex marriages were evil and “those people must be killed”. The student subsequently dropped out of school. In another incident a 14-year-old lesbian student was in a Western Cape school was made to sit in the foyer of the administration building for several days after defying an order to wear a dress instead of trousers. Another student, 12- years- old, from Mpumalanga was turned away from school because her haircut “made her look like a lesbian”.



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[Various studies](#) have shown South African schools are still sites of social and gender discrimination and exclusion impacting on access to education for LGBTI students. The existing *Draft National Guidelines on School Uniforms* do not address this issue adequately. Unfortunately, the existing draft guidelines continue to reinforce sexist and discriminatory separation of “girls and boys” leaving little room for LGBTI students being able to wear uniforms that fit with their gender expression.

The Commission will be following up with various stakeholders on this matter to ensure that a finalized National guideline on School Uniforms is expedited in order to ensure that LGBTI students are protected from further gender discrimination. As a result, the Commission for Gender Equality calls upon the Department of Basic Education to redraft the existing guidelines to accord with the rights to human dignity, the right to education, freedom of expression

**END,**

**Issued by Commission for Gender Equality**

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The Commission for Gender Equality is established in terms of Section 181 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development, and attainment of gender equality.

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