



COMMISSION GEARS UP FOR TIGHTER, AFFORDABLE COMPETITIVE UNIFORM REGIME THIS YEAR

The Commission is intensifying its efforts to ensure that school uniform becomes reasonable and affordable for parents through an extensive advocacy targeted at parents, governing bodies, retailers and schools.

In February last year the Commission signed agreements with several private schools following constructive engagements and remarkable cooperation by the schools which included Curro, Advtech and Reddam House.

Further, school governing bodies led by Federation of Governing Bodies of South Africa (FEDSAS), an association of largely public schools, as well as the Independent Schools of Southern Africa (ISASA) made a public pledge to adhere to the school uniform guidelines aimed at curbing anti-competitive behaviour at schools. Most importantly, the guidelines were intended at ensuring that school uniform becomes reasonable and affordable.

The Commission continues to engage further with all stakeholders including private schools, suppliers, governing bodies and the government in order to make sure that there's compliance, as well as adequate monitoring and oversight.

The school uniform guidelines include the following:

1. School uniform should be as generic as possible such that it is obtainable from as many suppliers possible.
2. Exclusivity should be limited to items that the schools regard as necessary to obtain from pre-selected suppliers, for example badges.

3. Schools should endeavour to follow a competitive bidding process when appointing suppliers. They should appoint more than one supplier in order to give parents more options.
4. The concluded agreements should be of limited duration.

The Commission is currently interacting with various schools in order to assist them to build capacity, establish and maintain the necessary expertise to monitor and manage anti-competitive conduct. This includes the phasing out of exclusive agreements and evergreen contracts. This means the process of introducing reasonable and affordable prices will be gradual in some instances.

Parents are also urged to continue to monitor anti-competitive conduct in schools and must insist on the governing bodies to implement the uniform guidelines. The success of the initiative to bring reasonable and affordable uniform depends largely on involved and active parents. If governing bodies manage schools on behalf of the parents, it cannot be that parents must bear the brunt of expensive prices.

The Commission is encouraged by the progress made by various schools in making school uniform more affordable and accessible. In instance where there is noncompliance with the Competition Act, the Commission will take appropriate action particularly as bringing down the cost of school uniform remains the priority.

[ENDS]

Issued by:

Sipho Ngwema, Head of Communications

On behalf of: The Competition Commission of South Africa

Tel: 012 394 3493 / 081 253 8889

Email: SiphoN@compcom.co.za

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