

## School Dress Code Guidelines - Sikh

**Australia's multifaith and multicultural differences are increasingly reflected in the wearing of religious symbols and dress. The adherents are simply complying with their religious practices and beliefs. These should be considered in determining a dress code policy and choosing a school uniform. This document provides guidance as to what is expected in accordance with Sikh religious practices.**

Sikhs have five articles of faith. These begin with the letter K and are usually referred to as five K's, which are:

- **Kesh** uncut hair usually tied up as a knot. There is no shaving of facial hair or from any part of the body
- **Kanga** a small wooden comb
- **Kachhera** prescribed shorts worn as an undergarment
- **Kara** a steel bracelet worn on the right wrist
- **Kirpan** a small sheathed sword

In addition to the five K's Sikhs wear a turban and /or Patka (a scarf-like head covering). This is required head dress for males though, but females have an option to wear these too.

Sikhs who have been initiated by receiving Amrit are expected to wear the five K's including the head covering (turban or patka) at all times. This code of dress has been mandatory since 1699.

Those who are not initiated may have one or more of the five K's on them e.g. unshorn hair covered by a turban or patka and a Kara.

A high level of loyalty and sacrifice is demanded from those wearing the five K's. Self-discipline is considered of utmost importance and the initiated Sikh is expected to observe a strict code of conduct.

### Guidelines

- There should be no objection to the wearing of the five K's including the kirpan for those who are initiated. If in doubt consult with parents or religious authority.
- Members of the School community – pupils, parents and staff should be aware of the significance of the five K's.
- Schools should never ask students to remove any of the five K's.
- If circumstances arise when a school is concerned about a matter related to the five K's parents and/or religious leaders should be consulted.

- **Kara.** Students should be allowed to wear the Kara even if that is the only item the student is wearing. It is not an item of jewelry.
- **Kesh.** Students with long hair should be allowed to wear the turban and or patka to match the school uniform.
- **Kirpan** The kirpan is not an offensive weapon. It is never unsheathed to threaten others. If it is so used then the student should be subject to School's Disciplinary procedures.. To our knowledge no case has been reported in Victorian schools that a kirpan has been used by a Sikh student to threaten or injure themselves or others.

**Exemption.** There is an exemption under the Control Of weapons Act 1990. This is a General Exemption Under Section 8B to possess swords which states:

“The Governor in Council, under Section 8B of the **Controls of Weapons Act**, exempts from the operation of section (1) and section 5 (1A) of the Control of Weapons Act 1990, in relation to Kirpans (swords), a person who is of a class of persons set out in an item in Column 1 of Table A, to the extent specified opposite that item in Column 2 of Table A.

Table A

**Class of persons Exempt (Column 1). A Sikh whose religious practices require the carrying and possession of a Kirpan (a specified type of sword).**

**Exemption (column 2) Bringing a Kirpan into Victoria, causing a Kirpan to be brought into or sent into Victoria, selling or purchasing a Kirpan, displaying or advertising a Kirpan for sale, possessing, using or carrying a Kirpan - for the purpose of the performance of duties associated with religious observance”.**

**It should be noted that the phrase ‘...for the purpose of the performance of duties associated with religious observance’ the actual carrying of the Kirpan represents religious observance. So, unless the Kirpan is being used for some other purpose, religious observance is being performed by virtue of carrying it.**