

No skirting issue in call for girl uniform change

Korean bidders snare Arrium

LUKE GRIFFITHS
BUSINESS REPORTER

THE sale of Whyalla's steelworks is one step closer after a South Korean consortium was named the preferred bidder for Arrium.

In a statement issued late yesterday, Arrium administrator KordaMentha said Newlake Alliance Management and JB Asset Management, which will use South Korean steel giant Posco's technology, had been chosen ahead of UK-based Liberty House (GFG Alliance).

Despite the sale process being shrouded in secrecy, it is understood the consortium has pledged to build a 200MW gas-fired power plant at the steelworks, with any surplus power fed back into the national grid.

Late last year, SA Treasurer Tom Koutstantonis and then-Federal Industry Minister Greg Hunt visited Posco's Korean headquarters.

At the time, Mr Hunt said Posco had proposed constructing a new steel plant at Whyalla, which used modern technology to build low-cost, high-quality product.

"They want to make that investment, which would increase production by up to 1.2 million tonnes, or more than 50 per cent," he said.

"This for them is an investment for the next 50 years and beyond and they have a strong positive view of the workforce."

KordaMentha and Morgan Stanley, which managed the sale process, will now work with the consortium to finalise the sale "as soon as possible".

The State Government has already pledged \$50 million for a capital upgrade at the steelworks, while the Commonwealth has fast-tracked a rail project that will source Whyalla steel.

Sanjeev Gupta, executive chairman of GFG Alliance, said although he was "surprised and disappointed" by the decision "we remain willing to step in again should the opportunity arise".

MITCHAM GIRLS HAVE THEIR SAY

Millie Thompson, 15

"I wear pants because they are comfortable and (suitable) in colder weather. Uniforms are good because it takes the stress out of choosing a different outfit every day."

Madison Lucas, 16

"I wear the skirt because it's kind of what I've always known because I came from (private) Woodcroft College. I feel like uniforms restrict creativity and students can't really be themselves."

Claire Collins, 15

"I wear the dress because it's really light and comfortable (and) I can layer it with the jumper options. Uniforms probably reduce bullying because you are not judged for what you wear."

An Pham, 14, Vietnamese international student

"I wear pants because it's comfortable and they keep me warm. (In Vietnam) we don't have the variety of choices. It's a skirt and a shirt for the whole week."

Ellen Demagd, 15

"I always wear the skirt because I don't like the dresses as much. It's comfortable. Uniforms are a good idea because you don't have to choose what you wear every morning."

EXCLUSIVE TIM WILLIAMS EDUCATION REPORTER

AN OVERWHELMING majority of public school parents say female students should not have to wear traditional "girl" uniforms, while many principals want to get rid of uniforms altogether.

A survey by key parent group SAASSO found just above 90 per cent of more than 1100 respondents believed girls should not have to wear skirts and dresses.

Director of SA Association of State School Organisations David Knuckey said a third of

respondents thought girl-specific uniforms were discriminatory "in the context of sexism and the impact on female students".

While overall there was strong support for retaining uniforms in some form, particularly from mothers, many principals were against it. The report revealed that a quarter of 68 principals surveyed and half of the 78 deputy principals, thought all uniforms should be banned.

Mr Knuckey said: "With negative gender stereotypes known to have disastrous impacts on female students, it is time to rethink making them

dress like 'girls?' he said. "While schools have long held that uniforms improve discipline, experts, parents and students are now calling school uniforms sexist – a discriminatory disadvantage."

The survey report said some schools already had "flexible" options for girls, while there was a growing trend of schools choosing a dress code "rather than a specified school uniform".

But some respondents favoured traditional girls' outfits, with one writing: "Why do we want to make boys and girls dress the same?"

The Education Department

said school councils decided uniforms and dress codes in consultation with parents and students.

"Regardless of a student's gender, the dress code should be flexible and allow the right of choice," a spokeswoman said.

"The department doesn't have the exact number of how many schools offer gender neutral uniforms and what proportion still have separate boys and girls uniforms, but we do know many schools offer multiple uniform options for students, including gender neutral."

Mitcham Girls High principal Antoinette Jones said her students had "a wide range" of

uniform options so they could wear "whatever makes them feel comfortable".

"All of the girls would have the trousers; as well as the skirts (and wear them) according to the weather and what's clean and what's not clean," she said. Ms Jones said uniforms were "a leveller" between students of different socio-economic backgrounds.

Students were generally "very unsettled" and less well behaved on casual clothes days, she said.

TELL US: DO YOU THINK UNIFORMS SHOULD BE BANNED FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS? ADVERTISER.COM.AU

MID YEAR SALE

MUST END JUNE 30

30% - 50% OFF ALL RUGS!



AN INSPIRED CHOICE