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MERCY ADMIN CENT

ATTENTION: FR BRIAN. 001

## Mercy Administration Centre

ROCKHAMPTON CONGREGATION  
OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY  
OF AUSTRALIA



The Range,  
263 Agnes Street,  
Rockhampton Q. 4700

P.O. Box 1576,  
Rockhampton Q. 4700

Telephone: 07 4927 1866  
Facsimile: 07 4922 3040

Email: rok\_som@r130.aone.net.au

**Media Release issued 20 July 1998 by Sr Di-Anne Rowan, Congregational Leader of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy pertaining to media reports of a State Government Inquiry into allegations of abuse at former Church and State run orphanages.**

Sr Di-Anne said that all she knew to date of any Government initiated inquiry into former Queensland orphanages was what she had seen reported in the media.

"We have requested a meeting with Families, Youth and Community Services Minister, Ms Anna Bligh and we look forward to hearing first hand from the Minister as to what the Government is proposing" Sr Di-Anne said.

"Prior to then, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the merits of any mooted Inquiry into former Queensland orphanages other than to say that the Children's Commissioner, Mr Norm Alford would appear to be the best placed person to conduct any such Inquiry. I understand that Royal Commission style Inquiries are very protracted, costly and legally complex and I do have some concerns as to whether that type of Inquiry is in the best interests of the former orphanage residents. Our focus must always be on maximising the assistance we can offer to the former residents today. Although we would wish it otherwise, we cannot change the past - we can only try to help create a better future for the former residents" Sr Di-Anne added.

Sr Di-Anne said that she fully supported the introduction into the Parliament of any legislation that would allow both the Children's Commissioner and the former Neerkol residents easier access to their Departmental files. Such legislative amendments would be an integral part of equipping Mr Alford with the powers he would need to conduct as full an Inquiry as possible.

"I know that Children's Commissioner, Mr Norm Alford, is finalising a preliminary Report on the historical context of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol and we expect that Report to be tabled in State Parliament in the near future. I am sure Mr Alford would agree that the Sisters have co-operated fully with his investigations and we commend him for the sensitivity and compassion he has shown towards the former Neerkol residents. Mr Alford would know that he can always be assured of our assistance with his inquiries" Sr Di-Anne said.

*Celebrating 125 years in 1998*