

# 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*

2 April 1998

Mrs Naomi Wilson  
Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care  
Family Services Building  
GPO Box 806  
BRISBANE Q 4001

Dear Mrs Wilson,

Allow me to introduce myself as Di-Anne Rowan, Congregational Leader of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy. My purpose in writing to you is two-fold.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you and thank you for your sensitive decision to move towards passing amending legislation to enable the former residents of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol easier access to their files. Having now worked closely with the members of the Neerkol Action Support Group Committee for the past 12 months, I know how important it is for them to learn more about their childhood and in particular their time at Neerkol.

I would presume that via the Children's Commissioner, Mr Alford, extensive media coverage and your own meeting with representatives of the Neerkol Action Support Group you would be aware of the progress that has been made in bringing about a genuine reconciliation between the former residents and our Congregation. Mr Alford has played a particularly constructive role in facilitating discussions involving the NASG Committee, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and ourselves. We are deeply appreciative to Mr Alford for all that he has done as Children Commissioner to help the former residents and the support he has given to us in our efforts to promote healing and reconciliation. I have attached to this correspondence copies of the Apologies given to the former Neerkol residents by the Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton, Brian Heenan and by myself as Congregational Leader of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy.

My second purpose in writing to you is to suggest that there may be merit in Bishop Heenan, myself and representatives of our organisations meeting with you in the near future. I would see this as a good opportunity to personally update you on what has transpired thus far and to assure you of our ongoing commitment to responding to the needs of the former Neerkol residents with love and compassion. We could also discuss with you ways that your Department and ourselves may be able to work together co-operatively to maximise the support and assistance that can be provided to the former residents. In addition, I believe that with Neerkol being an ongoing issue there are obvious communication and mutual understanding benefits from us getting to meet one another in person.

Mrs Wilson, if you are happy to agree to meet with the Bishop, myself and representatives of our respective organisations, please let me know a possible date and time that may be suitable to you and we will endeavour to organise our schedules to suit. Once again, thank you for your timely and appropriate response to the needs of the former residents of Neerkol and I look forward to meeting you at the earliest suitable opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Di Anne Rowan".

**Di-Anne Rowan**  
**Congregational Leader**