

Mercy Administration Centre

ROCKHAMPTON CONGREGATION
OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY
OF AUSTRALIA



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Media Release issued 12 April 1998 by Sr Di-Anne Rowan, Congregational Leader of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy in response to enquiries by Christine Retschlag of the Courier Mail regarding the progress of the Neerkol Reconciliation Process.

Sr Di-Anne said she would welcome any move by the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Mrs Naomi Wilson that would enable the former residents of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol to gain easier access to their files held by the Department. "Having had the opportunity over the past twelve months to listen to the life experiences of many former Neerkol residents, I understand the importance of them knowing as much as possible about their childhood and their time at the Home", Sr Di-Anne said.

Sr Di-Anne said she would also welcome the opportunity to meet with Mrs Wilson to update her personally on the progress that the Sisters, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the former residents had made on their journey of reconciliation. "In meeting Mrs Wilson, I would also give to her an assurance that the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy have an ongoing commitment to the reconciliation process. There can be no time limit on healing and reconciliation and although the journey will not always be easy, we will do all that we can to achieve a lasting reconciliation with the former residents of St Joseph's", Sr Di-Anne added.

Sr Di-Anne said she had been heartened by comments made by Neerkol Action Support Group media spokesperson, Mr Allan Allaway that emphasised the great progress that had been made in discussions among the Sisters, the Catholic Church and the members of the NASG over the past twelve months. "Mr Allaway, Mr AYD [redacted] (Chairman NASG) and Ms Eather (Secretary NASG) along with all the members of the NASG Committee have worked so hard in the last 12 months and the reconciliation that has been achieved is a tribute to their efforts and the spirit of goodwill and emerging trust they have shown throughout our ongoing discussions", said Sr Di-Anne.

Sr Di-Anne said she hoped this goodwill and trust would continue into the next phase of the journey of reconciliation that involved the determination of just and equitable compensation. "Compensation is a complex matter and all parties have agreed that it is best handled by our respective legal representatives. We do not believe that traditional court processes with their costs and delays are a suitable means of resolving these compensation claims. Although the number of claimants and the differing consequences of their experiences at Neerkol makes the task of determining individual compensation claims more difficult, we hope that the lawyers for the NASG and our lawyers will be able to develop a settlement model that will be fair and just to all", Sr Di-Anne stated.