

MERCY ADMINISTRATION CENTRE

ROCKHAMPTON CONGREGATION
OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE
SISTERS OF MERCY OF AUSTRALIA



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MEDIA RELEASE

ISSUED 2 JUNE 1997 BY THE CONGREGATIONAL LEADER OF THE ROCKHAMPTON SISTERS OF MERCY SR DI-ANNE ROWAN.

STATEMENT PERTAINS TO THE FORMATION OF THE SUPPORT GROUP FOR FORMER RESIDENTS OF ST. JOSEPH'S HOME, NEERKOL.

The Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy welcome the setting up of the support group by former residents of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol. Congregational Leader Sr Di-Anne Rowan said that she was looking forward to meeting with the support group, or the committee it had appointed, at the earliest opportunity.

Sr Di-Anne said the obvious pain still being felt by those who attended the former resident's meeting last Friday distressed her and all of the Sisters greatly. "The process of healing and reconciliation must go forward as quickly as possible and if an early meeting with the support group will assist in easing the pain and sorrow being experienced, then that is what I am prepared to do", Sr Di-Anne added.

Sr Di-Anne said that the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy were prepared to listen sympathetically to any reasonable request that may be made of them to assist in the funding of the support group's activities. "To date I only know what I have learned from media reports of the decisions taken by the former residents at last Friday's meeting, but I have advised meeting organiser Mr Allan Allaway previously, that if we can provide reasonable, practical, tangible support to assist the self-help group with the reconciliation process, then we are prepared to do so" Sr Di-Anne said.

Sr Di-Anne said that it was important to realise that much was already being done by the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy to respond to the needs of those who had such traumatic memories of their days at St Joseph's Home, Neerkol. A public apology had been issued, a Professional Standards Committee had been established and a telephone hotline set up where former residents could speak to a qualified, independent social worker. Many people were availing themselves of the telephone line and callers were being offered a range of options including a personal written apology, telephone or face-to-face counselling, meetings with Sisters of Mercy or access to additional support services that may be able to be provided, Sr Di-Anne added.

St Joseph's Home, Neerkol operated for 90 years between 1885 and 1978 and ministered to over 4000 homeless children.