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**ROCKHAMPTON CONGREGATION
OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY
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Media Release issued 19 July 1999 by Sr Di-Anne Rowan, Congregational Leader of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy, pertaining to an out of court settlement finalised with former residents of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol.

Sr Di-Anne Rowan said that the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton have finalised an out of court settlement with some 75 former residents of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol.

"We are pleased that we have been able to reach a settlement with the vast majority of the former residents who had taken legal action against us" Sr Di-Anne said.

Sr Di-Anne said that the out of court settlement was another important step in the reconciliation process. "The Sisters and the Diocese met some 2 years ago with the Neerkol Action Support Group Committee and after listening to their pain issued a formal public apology to all former residents of Neerkol" Sr Di-Anne said.

"We also responded by providing funds for the establishment of the Neerkol Action Support Group (NASG) and the Sisters have given an assurance to the NASG that we will continue to fund our Professional Standards Office for another two and a half years. This Office has helped many former Neerkol residents over the past 2 years with counselling and other professional services" Sr Di-Anne added.

Sr Di-Anne said that she was aware there were some former residents involved in the legal action who had not been able to see their way clear to be a part of the out of court settlement.

"All I can say to these people is that I am sensitive to their views and I understand the difficulties of reaching an outcome that would satisfy the expectations of everyone concerned" Sr Di-Anne said.

Sr Di-Anne said that the settlement offered should not be considered in isolation but as a part of the total response by the Sisters and the Diocese to the pain expressed by the former residents. "I believe that, having regard for all the prevailing circumstances, the out of court settlement represents an honest and sincere attempt to acknowledge the hurt of the past and to provide some compensation" Sr Di-Anne said.

"I would like to thank the lawyers for all parties to the settlement for the trust and goodwill that characterised the negotiations. I would also like to thank the former residents who participated in the settlement process for their patience and understanding in waiting for the complex and difficult legal matters to be finalised" Sr Di-Anne added.