

22-MAY '97 (THU) 16:50

CHILDRENS COMMISSION

TEL: 6

61 7 32475507

P. 002

NEERKOL SUPPORT GROUP COMMITTEE

*C/- Ms Mary Eather & Mr Allan Allaway
G.P.O. Box 259
BRISBANE Q 4001*

Dear Friend,

We, the past residents of St Joseph's Home Neerkol, would like to organise a meeting amongst ourselves so we can discuss our grievances and needs for redress and to elect a Committee to take the issues to the Roman Catholic Church, The Sisters of Mercy, and the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care (formerly the Department of Children's Services).

It is proposed that the meeting take place on Friday 30 May 1997 at 2.00p.m. at a venue in Brisbane city. (Venue to be decided depending on numbers.)

The aim of the meeting is to elect a committee to organise ways to provide information to victims and to plan future meetings based on the group's needs.

The meeting will be attended by former residents and will have information presented by:

- (i) Mr Norman Alford, Children's Commissioner and Ms Anne-Louise Nilsson, A Manager, Review Unit, Children's Commission in relation to the work undertaken by the Commission regarding Neerkol.
- (ii) Members of Victims of Crime in relation to court support, counselling and legal representation.

If you are able to attend the meeting please complete the attached form and return it as soon as possible. If not, please complete the form, indicating if you wish to continue to receive information about the group.

If you wish to make a formal complaint please include in dot point form the following information:

- (i) *whether you experienced or saw abuse;*
- (ii) *who delivered the abuse and their name/s;*
- (iii) *the type of abuse i.e. psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, spiritual and educational;*
- (iv) *please state the years you spent in the home and whether or not you were a STATE WARD, Child Migrant or private boarder; and*
- (v) *whether you were employed by the State Department in the home or services outside the home, the length of your employment and whether you got your wages at the time of discharge.*

(3)

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Please also include whether or not you have contacted or informed the Church, the Department or any other authority about your abuse at the time or any time after leaving the home.

If you were a State Ward you are now able to obtain your files under the Freedom of Information Act and should you wish to have copies please call the following number and request an application form. State that you are a past resident of Neerkol:

Toll Free 1800 809 078

No financial commitment is required from you. All we are asking for is to support each other by coming forward and telling us your experiences either by what happened to you or by what you saw going on.

The Nuns are stating that we, the ex-orphans, are EXAGGERATING our claims of abuse, that we do not remember incidents accurately and that what we are doing is a vendetta against the Church. We are NOT on a vindictive witch hunt, all we are endeavouring to achieve is "Justice".

It is shameful that the Roman Catholic Church is trying to silence us about their misdeeds (sins of commission or omission) as they have managed to do so in the past, robbing us of our dignity and self-esteem. Do they find comfort in denying us of these rights? We, the innocent victims have carried the guilt of their wrong doings for too long.

They say they can stand by their reputation as having "lovingly cared for those thousands who have been educated by them". Why should they worry about a mere number of disgruntled orphans whom they abused! We are, as they say, just a "Passing Shadow" (The Australian) - saying in essence we are of no consequence - well this shadow can turn into a very dark stormy cloud! Hence the essential need for your support and moreover your personal need to have your grievances addressed in order to look to the future and put the past behind.

Should you choose to contact the Sisters of Mercy Committee as advised by them on television, have a witness present and take notes. This can be done by calling 041 775 1535.

If you require further details from us please contact us through Ms Anne-Louise Nilsson on:

(07) 3247 5510

or *Toll Free 1800 809 078. -- SIGNED BY 1800 688 275*

Your response to this letter would be advisable and appreciated as early as possible.

WE STAND UNITED

Yours faithfully,

Mr Allan Allaway
Ms Mary Eather