

Mercy Administration Centre

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**SISTERS OF MERCY ROCKHAMPTON
MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE
OF SISTERS OF MERCY
OF AUSTRALIA**

We, the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy, wish to apologise unreservedly to you the former residents of St Joseph's Home Neerkol, who were victims of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual abuse.

We recognise the pain that many of you suffered because we did not offer you the basic love and affection that every child in our care deserved. We also acknowledge that we should have provided you with more food, clothing and warmth. We regret the mistakes that were made through policies and practices, such as, the physical separation of brothers and sisters in dormitories which added to your loneliness and isolation.

Having had the opportunity to listen to some of your experiences and hear the instances of brutality you describe, we have been helped to understand the hurt, humiliation and pain you suffered, and continue to suffer daily throughout your lives. We acknowledge it is time to recognise the unprovoked, unnecessary and ongoing abuses you endured, and we are sorry that we failed to imagine how you must have felt being subjected to such unwarranted physical suffering.

It must be said that there were many Sisters and other people who did accomplish much good but this offers us little comfort in the face of the pain of you who were hurt.

Indeed, as we hear of your life experiences which contradicted all that we believe in, we regret that our initial reaction to what you were saying was scepticism and disbelief. We regret that this caused you hurt and we realise now how important it is for people to be able to share their individual life experiences with us.

We are deeply sorry for the hurt that was caused but unfortunately we cannot change the past, and yet we appreciate that the memories of the past are still affecting you and your families today.

We are committed to offering you whatever practical support that we are able to provide. To this end we have established a Professional Standards Committee offering a range of practical assistance measures including independent and confidential counselling, we have provided the funding requested by the Victims of Crime Association of Queensland to support witnesses at court hearings and we have funded for a specified period of time the expenses you requested for the Neerkol Action Support Group.

We now offer this apology in the hope that it will be of further help and comfort to you the former residents of St Joseph's Home, Neerkol.

Handwritten signature of Sr Berneice Loch.

Sr Berneice Loch RSM
Congregation Leader - Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy