

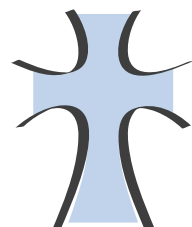
Administrative Handbook for Mercy Associates

If we are humble and sincere, God will finish in us the work He has begun.
He never refuses His grace to those who ask it.

Catherine McAuley, Familiar Instructions



Version 2
February 2021



MERCY
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

One Charism, Many Paths

CONTENTS

Section	Topic	Page
	Introductory Documents	
	Message from Institute Leader	4
	Vision Statement	5
	The Mercy Associates Vision in Practice	5
	Mercy Associates Logo and Motto	6
1	Administrative Handbook and Formation Resource Book	7
2	Being a Mercy Associate	8
2.1	Criteria for becoming a Mercy Associate	8
2.2	Conduct and Responsibilities	8
2.3	ISMAPNG Code of Conduct and Safeguarding	10
2.4	Commitments of Mercy Associates	11
3	Meetings and Practical Matters	13
3.1	Meetings of Mercy Associate Groups	13
3.2	Roles and Coordination of Groups	13
3.3	Minutes and Record Keeping	14
3.4	Financial Matters	15
3.5	Safety, Risk and Insurance for Mercy Associates	17
3.6	Legal Responsibilities	19
3.7	Privacy Legislation Requirements	20
3.8	Letterhead, Logo and their Use	20
3.9	Mercy Associates Badges	21
3.10	Printed and Digital Materials about Mercy Associates	21
4	Groups	22
4.1	Establishing a new Mercy Associates Group	23
4.2	Role of Mercy Associates supporting aspiring Associates	23
4.3	Commitment Ceremony	24
4.4	Renewal of Commitment	25
4.5	Transfers	25
4.6	Removal from a Mercy Associates Group	25
4.7	Mercy Associate Honorary	26
4.8	Withdrawal from Mercy Associates Commitment	27
4.9	Closing a Mercy Associates Group	28

5	Support and Structure	29
5.1	Support and Structure for Mercy Associates in Australia and Papua New Guinea	29
5.2	Local Mercy Associates Groups	29
5.3	Mercy Associates Leadership Group	29
5.4	Network Facilitators	30
5.5	Communications	30
5.6	Links with other Mercy Associates Groups	31
6	Appendices	32
A	ISMAPNG Chapter Statement 2017-2023	32
B	ISMAPNG Charter for Mercy Associates	33
C	Record of Ministries and Activities undertaken by Mercy Associates Groups	35
D	Risk Assessment Resource	36
E	Registration Form for Aspiring Mercy Associates	38
F	Expression of Interest Form for Aspiring Mercy Associates	39
G	Commitment Statement	40
H	Certificates and Badges: Procedures for Preparing and Despatching	41
I	Commitment / Renewal Ceremony outline	43
J	Annual Reflection	45
K	Template for Minutes of Meetings	46
L	Basic Terms and General Information	47
	General Information	48

Version 2.0

Endorsed for use by all Mercy Associates groups, February 2021.

Review due: by March 2022

Welcome to the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea as a Mercy Associate.

There have been groups of women and men associated with Mercy Sisters in varying contexts across the world as work colleagues and friends for many years. Some people have asked to have a more formal connection and hence Mercy Associates were established. This has arisen out of a love of the gospel and the unique story and spirituality of Catherine McAuley who lived her love of God in a particular way through the lens of Mercy. In recent times the Year of Mercy has deepened the awareness of the whole Church to the charism of Mercy as its particular expression of the living God.

The Institute appreciates this movement as a way in which God's message of Mercy is passed on and realised through those who feel impelled to live their lives in a way that is expressed through deep compassion to others around them. Mercy Associates respond to a call to Mercy in a way that is quite distinct from that of the Religious vocation. This we encourage.

Women and men called to be Associates live out their Mercy calling in a variety of ways suited to their personal gifts and contexts. All are responses to the mission of Jesus lived with authenticity.

May you always find inspiration in the God who is Mercy, who called Catherine to Mercy, and who calls each and every one of us to Mercy in our time in a world greatly in need of the tender gift of mercy.



Eveline Crotty
Institute Leader

July 2018

The Mercy Associates Charter, a document from the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) that formally establishes Mercy Associates within the Institute, is included in this Handbook as Appendix B.

Mercy Associates

Vision Statement

Mercy Associates are called to live and share the compassion of God revealed in the life of Jesus Christ, in Scripture and through the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley.

Guided by mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope, they:

- ◆ celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love
- ◆ nurture their relationship with God to enable them to witness to their faith in prayer and action
- ◆ give expression to God's mercy:
 - in response to the needs of these times
 - in the ordinariness of their daily lives
 - and in all their relationships
- ◆ journey with each other and the Sisters of Mercy.

The Mercy Associates Vision in Practice

Mercy Associates are women and men seeking a faith community in which to nurture and live out the charism of Mercy. They deepen their engagement with Mercy by:

Participating in broad-based formation at Institute and local level:

- Engage in formation opportunities that form a Mercy culture for the sake of God's mission, through:
 - ◆ Engaging with the story of God's mercy, Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy
 - ◆ Developing a reflective, mindful perspective on Mercy and Justice issues
 - ◆ Experiencing Mercy in action
 - ◆ Growing a just and compassionate community
- Participate in gatherings and pilgrimages to Mercy places of heritage – local, regional, national and international.

Ensuring a balance between contemplation and action in the Mercy tradition:

- Nurture a spirit of prayer individually and at all gatherings
- Celebrate significant Mercy dates and occasions locally and across the Institute
- Offer prayerful support for the flourishing of the Mercy charism
- Identify social needs and issues, including calls for Mercy ministry support
- Nurture a practice of discernment drawing on scripture, tradition, Catholic Social Teaching and life experiences
- Respond by prayer and action to the needs of our time
- Support the public voice of ISMAPNG on justice issues.

Mercy Associates Logo and Motto



Logo

The elements of the Mercy Associates cross, used in the badge and on documentation, serve to communicate some important aspects about identity and values.

The interior cross is in the same shape as the exterior of the Mercy cross, worn by Sisters of Mercy around the world. The coloured interior of the cross is blue, a prominent colour in ISMAPNG branding, representing the relationship between Mercy Associates and the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea.

The four sweeps around the coloured cross have multiple symbolic elements:

- They connect with the Mercy cross outline, as the Mercy Associates are connected with the Sisters of Mercy
- As they extend openly beyond all arms of the cross, they symbolise the openness of Mercy Associates to welcome lay women and men who share their commitment to living the charism of Mercy in their daily lives
- These extensions also symbolise the intention of Mercy Associates to reach out to the world, extending the reach of Mercy and complementing the work of the Sisters of Mercy.

Motto

The motto “One Charism, Many Paths” highlights the core enduring quality of divine Mercy, the Mercy of God, as it is lived out in the lives of people across the millennia. Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, expressed God’s Mercy in a way that was radical for a woman of her time, reaching out to serve the most needy in her city.

The charism of Mercy lived by Sisters of Mercy is an ongoing expression of the charism of Catherine McAuley. That charism is lived by Sisters of Mercy in a specific way that involves life-long vows as religious women. It may also be lived by all women and men. For Mercy Associates the charism of Mercy is lived in their daily lives as lay women and men, always aware that just as each human being is unique, so also the way in which each will live the Mercy charism is unique – one charism, many paths.

1.0 Administrative Handbook and Formation Resource Book

This administrative handbook has been prepared to support Mercy Associates groups across the Institute in their endeavours to live the Mercy charism in their day to day lives, supporting each other and the Sisters of Mercy as they do so.

Among its purposes is to create unity among Mercy Associates groups by providing a common framework to guide the variety of activities undertaken by these groups. Despite the massive geographic distances that separate Mercy Associates groups in the countries covered by the Institute, there is very considerable common ground, as described above in the Vision Statement and its way of being practised. The use of this handbook by all groups will ensure a cohesive Mercy Associates movement operates in all these places, supporting each other and the Sisters of Mercy, and in doing so, strengthening the expression of Mercy in our world.

There is a second resource for Mercy Associates and that is the ***Formation Resource***. It is designed to assist those undergoing preparation (formation) and discernment to become Mercy Associates so they can become familiar with the life of Catherine McAuley, the charism, history and ministries of the Sisters of Mercy, and the nature of being a Mercy Associate. The Formation Resource is part of the journey to becoming a Mercy Associate and contains a great deal of useful information. Because of this, it will be beneficial for all Mercy Associates to access this for their personal reflection, even those who have been Mercy Associates for a number of years. It is available on the ISMAPNG website, <https://institute.mercy.org.au/become-involved/become-a-mercy-associate/>

This ***Administrative Handbook*** is housed on the ISMAPNG website, at the above link. It is updated annually, so the web version will always be the current version. It is of value for each group to print out one copy to have available at meetings, but it is important to update this every year once the group is notified that an updated version is available.

2.0 Being a Mercy Associate

2.1 Criteria for becoming a Mercy Associate

The Mercy Associates movement is open to lay women and men seeking a faith community in which to nurture and live out the charism of Mercy.

To become a Mercy Associate, women and men need to:

- Be 16 years of age or over (those aged 16 or 17 years are only able to join a group operating within a school)
- Be baptised in a Christian denomination
- Participate in the preparation and discernment process
- Be supported by two Mercy Associates or the Network Facilitator (see below)
- Join a Mercy Associates group
- Make a commitment to be a Mercy Associate and renew this at least every third year
- Be lay persons, and not members of the clergy or members of religious congregations.

The points above identify who may benefit from becoming a Mercy Associate, yet also identify those for whom this movement is not appropriate. For those under 16 years of age, programmes designed for younger people are available in Mercy schools. Similarly, those who are ordained or in religious vows have already made a lifelong commitment to nurture their commitment to mercy values. In the case of Sisters of Mercy, it will be commonplace that they are invited to attend Mercy Associates meetings and gatherings and that they do attend regularly, however their religious vows already include their lifelong commitment to mercy.

Once an aspiring Mercy Associate has made their commitment, they will become part of a Mercy Associates group. This connection with a specific group is a key means by which a community of Mercy Associates is formed – being a Mercy Associate is not a solitary pursuit, but rather entails joining with others who share a commitment to mercy and drawing support from that small community. The establishment of groups that meet online is an emerging trend in the Mercy Associates movement. Such groups must be formally set up and meet all of the criteria that any other group that meets in person would meet.

When a new Mercy Associates group is about to be formed, it may not be feasible to have two existing Mercy Associates support aspiring Associates. Where this situation arises, provision will be made for a Network Facilitator or other person with a current connection to a Mercy Associates group to provide support and guidance. Because distance may be a factor, this support may be provided by phone and social media rather than by face-to-face presence.

2.2 Conduct and Responsibilities

Women and men who become Mercy Associates make a commitment to live their lives according to the Vision Statement and Vision in Practice presented earlier in this Handbook. Christianity is a faith that is based on relationships, including our relationship with God, ourselves, our neighbour, and our planet. Our human dignity and individual uniqueness flourish best when we mindfully attend to ourselves, those around us near and far, and our environment near and far, all in the context that everyone and everything is part of God's creation, gifted and entrusted to us.

The following lays out the conduct and responsibilities of Mercy Associates.

Mercy Associates are people who, by their **conduct**:

- Are attentive to the well-being of their group and its individual members, ensuring that by word and deed they support and encourage each other and the group as a whole;
- Are ever mindful of the need to be a living expression of the charism of Mercy;
- Are respectful in their relationships with group members and with those to whom they minister, attending to the cultural and other individual characteristics of each person;
- Are collaborative, seeking to draw on the wisdom and expertise of all in the Mercy Associates group to achieve the best outcomes for the group;
- Are willing to act respectfully and responsibly when differences of opinion arise, striving to find the best solution for the Mercy Associates group;
- Are open to listening to new ideas, trying new ways of doing things, welcoming new people into the Mercy Associates group.

And who accept **responsibility** to:

- Attend Mercy Associates meetings of their group, as well as other events, e.g., retreats, seminars, etc., unless illness, infirmity or other circumstances preclude attendance;
- Undertake any task or ministry they state they will do on behalf of their Mercy Associates group;
- Contribute actively to the well-being of their Mercy Associates group, including supporting those taking on specific roles and offering to take on a specific role from time to time as needed, and relinquishing those roles to enable others to serve;
- Be open to prayer and contemplation, individually and in their Mercy Associates group, striving always to deepen their faith;
- Be a person of action, identifying and responding to needs for ministry where they can commit to serving (noting that Associates who are aged or infirm may not be able to undertake any active ministry, but will undertake prayer as their ministry);
- Support ISMAPNG and its ministries.

2.3 ISMAPNG Code of Conduct and Safeguarding

Following the Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse of Children, the Institute has steadily worked on improving and strengthening the awareness its personnel have of their responsibilities to protect those who are young and those who are vulnerable. The following letter from the Institute Leadership Team outlines their intentions.

Responding to the Royal Commission—from the Institute Leadership Team

Dear Mercy Associates,

As you appreciate, there are a number of recommendations from the Royal Commission which affect religious orders such as ISMAPNG. The Sisters of Mercy are keen to implement these recommendations as best they can.

Our Legal and Professional Standards staff are giving much valued assistance in this important work of implementation, which is concerned primarily with ensuring that children and other vulnerable people in our care, such as the frail aged, are safe and protected at all times. In that regard, we gratefully acknowledge the efforts that have been made over recent years to develop and abide by policies and practices of the highest standards.

At the same time, we can always strive to do more than we have to date, and so to ensure that our Institute is truly 'in accord with' the intentions of the Royal Commission's recommendations, our relevant policies and practices are currently being reviewed. These include

- the code of conduct for all sisters throughout the Institute who are engaged in ministry of any kind;
- the code of conduct for all Institute staff and volunteers throughout Australia and Papua New Guinea;
- the documents and practices related to the Initial Formation Programme for potential Institute members.

We will provide you with periodic updates on how the reviews are progressing.

The findings of the Royal Commission have been and remain deeply disturbing for people of all faiths and none. For many Catholics much trust in the Church and its ministers - clerical, religious and lay - has been destroyed. Please pray often that God's mercy will heal the hearts of all, especially the survivors of abuse and those who love them.

Gratefully

Eveline, Caroline, Gaye, Maureen and Liz

Institute Leadership Team

As a result of the above, the ISMAPNG Code of Conduct has been endorsed by the Institute Leadership Team and applies to all Mercy Associates, who are regarded as Volunteers of ISMAPNG.

The ISMAPNG Code of Conduct is published on the website: <https://institute.mercy.org.au/about-us/protection-of-children-and-vulnerable-people/>. Scroll down and you will come to the heading 'ISMAPNG Code of Conduct'. The Institute's Safeguarding Statement is also on this webpage.

The four core commitments of the Code of Conduct are:

1. **I commit to behaving respectfully, justly, honestly and with integrity.**
2. **I commit to creating a supportive, safe and caring environment.**
3. **I commit to safeguarding all people, particularly children and vulnerable people.**
4. **I commit to acting within the law, carefully, diligently and as a good steward of resources.**

Every Mercy Associate is required to undertake training in this Code of Conduct to ensure they understand the standards they must uphold in their conduct and words as Mercy Associates. The only exemptions apply to Mercy Associates who are no longer active in that they cannot attend meetings and participate in any active ministry due to age or infirmity. Groups must keep a record of who these Associates are and forward this to their Network Facilitator.

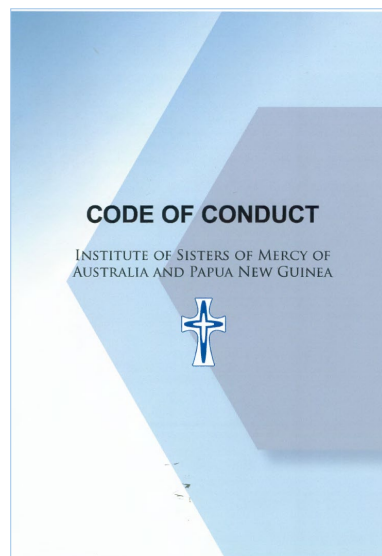
Safeguarding training (which included the Code of Conduct) was carried out from mid- to late 2019 for most Mercy Associates and involved each Associate receiving a copy of the Code of Conduct booklet, along with a laminated DL contact persons sheet at the training session. **For those who were not able to attend those sessions, a small manual has been developed for local Mercy Associates to guide others through the training.** Attendance records must be kept, and participants are asked to sign a form to indicate their acceptance of the Code of Conduct. The keeping of records such as these is not only good practice, but is needed to align with compliance requirements that cover ISMAPNG. From time to time, Catholic Professional Standards Ltd will conduct an audit of ISMAPNG and this will include Mercy Associates.

If there are Mercy Associates in your group who have not completed the Safeguarding / Code of Conduct training, please contact your Network Facilitator who will arrange for the materials to be sent to your group and ensure a Mercy Associate who has completed the training is available to guide them through it.

2.4 Commitments of Mercy Associates

The Vision Statement and Vision in Practice outline the commitments made by those who become Mercy Associates. Though there is a great deal contained in the Vision Statement and Vision in Practice, generally the content falls into four focus areas, and Mercy Associates are called to be active in these areas:

Formation: Our journey as Christians is a lifelong one, and we continually need to give ourselves opportunities to learn more about our faith and strengthen our relationship with God. For Mercy Associates there is also much to be learned about the life of Catherine McAuley, the ministries and lives of the Sisters of Mercy, and the needs of our community and the world beyond it that need the benefit of our prayer and action. It is strongly recommended that a period of time is spent on



formation at each Mercy Associates meeting. As well, Mercy Associates will find benefit in seeking other opportunities for formation, such as spiritual reading, attending seminars, etc.

Prayer and Contemplation: Our relationship with God underpins who we are and how we live. Mercy Associates are people of prayer. Their faith draws them to God, and they want to build a personal relationship with God. Prayer is a tonic for the soul, reminding us of who we are in the presence of God and of God's unwavering love and mercy towards us. Mercy Associates pray at their meetings; however they are encouraged to also have a habit of regular, daily practice of personal prayer, whether this involves set written prayers, the daily office, or a silent opening of the heart to God. A daily practice of contemplation is also an important practice for Mercy Associates. It is a spiritual practice that involves stillness and silence, allowing a person to think or reflect deeply about life, God, or perhaps an issue, dilemma, problem, mystery, etc., that affects their lives, and which needs undivided attention to discern a way forward.

The Network Facilitators prepare a **prayer and reflection resource each month** that is emailed to the contact person in each group, usually in the first week of the month. The contact person will then email this resource to all in their group who have email.

The Network Facilitators also facilitate an **online prayer gathering each month**, usually on the third Friday of the month. This is delivered using Zoom, and the weblink is emailed out about a fortnight before the gathering. All Mercy Associates are welcome to attend this prayer gathering.

Ministry – Service: Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy since her time have been women of action as well as prayer. They identify the needs of their day and seek ways to actively address those needs through service for those in need or experiencing injustice in our world. There are many options for service – it may be face-to-face contact with local people in need, including the sick, poor, homeless and refugees; it may be fund-raising or gathering resources for organisations serving those in need, such as MercyWorks; it may be prayer ministry, especially for Mercy Associates who are homebound and unable to actively participate in more active service initiatives. The Mercy Associates Vision Statement and the ISMAPNG Chapter Statement will guide groups in identifying their areas of ministry, and a copy of the Chapter Statement is contained in Appendix A.

Community – Mercy Associates Groups: As members of a group, Mercy Associates are part of a community which will nurture them and where they will share their gifts with others. The Church regards community as fundamental to being a person of faith. Mercy Associates share their faith with others and draw encouragement from their witness to their faith. Because participation in community is a core part of being a Mercy Associate, every Mercy Associate needs to be part of a particular group and usually this will be in the town they live in, their workplace, etc., though some online groups will form in the coming years.

3.0 Meetings and Practical Matters

3.1 Meetings of Mercy Associate Groups

The meetings groups hold are important because they provide a means of establishing and maintaining relationships with other Mercy Associates, and they are often the means of coordinating the activities and ministries the group will undertake. It is of great importance that Mercy Associates attend meetings as often as they can. Where age, ill health or other circumstances make it too difficult to attend, it is important to let the group know so the Mercy Associate can continue to be included in communications, and might on special occasions be able to attend a gathering.

There is considerable variation in how often Mercy Associates groups meet, and each has established a pattern over time that suits the needs of its members. Because Mercy Associates are members of a group, scheduling gatherings is an important way of supporting each other in faith, continuing to learn about Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, and coordinating the ministries undertaken by the group. Local Sisters of Mercy have often attended meetings over the years, and each Mercy Associates group may wish to invite Sisters living locally to attend their meetings and gatherings. Their presence is a gift to be cherished.

There should be at least four meetings of a Mercy Associates group each year, though most groups choose to meet more often than this. Where groups meet more frequently, some of their additional meetings may be totally focussed on prayer and contemplation, but this for the group to decide.

At formal Mercy Associates meetings, the following are recommended:

- A period of hospitality, sharing refreshments or a meal together;
- Some time for social interaction, forming and strengthening relationships among the Mercy Associates in that group;
- A time of prayer, which may be the Daily Office, scripture readings or reflections that lead to a period of prayer, the rosary, or other prepared prayers held dear by that group;
- A period of formation and learning, where input is provided by a Mercy Associate, a Sister or guest speaker on either a faith or social justice topic; or a scripture passage or other material is read and discussed;
- Discussion of ministries the group is involved with, including reviewing actions taken to date, becoming updated on developments in that area, and planning future actions to address the chosen need.

The order in which these are scheduled is the group's decision.

As well, most groups gather each year as near as possible to the feast of Our Lady of Mercy on September 24th to celebrate this key Mercy date. There may be other times, including particular feast days, that are important to a group at their local level and might also gather to celebrate that occasion.

3.2 Roles and Coordination of Groups

For any group to be sustainable, some of its members must be willing and able to undertake various roles that support the life of the group.

Often in earlier times groups had one leader, perhaps also a secretary and treasurer, and the leader was responsible for almost everything. There are many disadvantages to this way of doing things: other people don't get the chance to share their own skills and time; if the leader makes an

unwise decision everyone has to bear the consequences; and leaders who ‘do it all’ often burn-out and walk away, which is not good for them or the group.

The vision for Mercy Associates is to have groups being collaborative in coordinating their group and in its leadership – sharing the tasks that need to be done and supporting those who are doing them. Every group has members who have gifts and skills to contribute and it is the sharing of these that enables groups to also share leadership.

This concept of sharing responsibility for one or more aspects of the group’s activities would mean, for example, the following tasks might be taken on by a team of six to eight people in the group (for new groups, there may be fewer people to share these tasks), preferably with no one doing more than two of these tasks:

- arrange for a Mercy Associate or a guest speaker to provide formation or other input for their meetings;
- keep in phone contact with elderly or ill members who can’t get to meetings;
- prepare and lead the prayer at each meeting;
- support women and men aspiring to become Mercy Associates;
- be the contact person for the Network Facilitator and Mercy Associates Executive Officer;
- prepare a morning tea roster and ensure there is morning/afternoon tea at the meeting;
- take, write up and disseminate the minutes of each meeting and keep the group’s records;
- organise the prayer list of individual needs and needs around the world that would benefit from prayer support;
- plan fundraising (if the group wants to do this) or take up a collection (if the group wants to do this) and send it to the chosen organisation;
- check the venue is available, set up furniture and catering items, collect and return the key;
- be the coordinator of the Mercy Associates group who brings the above tasks together.

A good way to organise a group is to discuss at a meeting what tasks the group needs to do and other things they want to do. Once a list of these is drawn up, invite members to volunteer to carry out one of these tasks, and to do so for a fixed period of time, e.g., one, two or three years. After a member has served in one role for a few years, she or he stands down and it becomes possible for a new person to take on that role for the next few years. The person who has stood down from one role might offer to take on a different role, so that roles are rotated through members of the group. Over time this allows most if not all members of a Mercy Associates group to contribute their skills to the well-being of the group.

At meetings, some Mercy Associates in the group may have the ability to prepare some formation input, and this is encouraged. This might be in a few different formats: a short article (one or two pages) might be given to the group to read and discuss; a DVD might be played; a talk might be given; etc. Some variety of ways of input helps keep people interested, as does some variety in who is presenting the material for formation. There will be times when a guest speaker is invited to address the group and this is also a good way to broaden the understanding people have of topics relevant to Mercy Associates.

3.3 Minutes and Record Keeping

There is value in Mercy Associates groups keeping records of their meetings and activities.

Minutes: Minutes of a meeting should be taken, and these need only be a summary. They should include a list of those in attendance; date, time and location of the meeting; apologies; guest

speakers and one or two sentences about their address; the topic of the prayer and who led it; topics discussed by the group; decisions made about service or justice initiatives; and the date agreed for the next meeting. A template that may help is contained in Appendix K. The group may choose to keep a minutes book but it is sufficient that the minutes are kept in a secure place. At the end of each calendar year, please forward a copy of the year's minutes to your Network Facilitator – sending these by email is preferred.

Register of Mercy Associates: A register or database of women and men who are Mercy Associates in that group should be kept. This should contain their full name, address, phone and email; date of birth (these details are needed for insurance purposes); the date of initial commitment as a Mercy Associate and any subsequent renewals of that commitment; roles within the group, both current and past; emergency contact details (of a family member or friend); birthday (year of birth not necessary but could be optional); date of withdrawal, transfer to another group or termination from group. Should a Mercy Associate die, record their date of death and ensure their name is removed from email and postal distribution lists. The Network Facilitators will regularly seek to update records so that communications are sent to all Mercy Associates.

Registration forms: Most of the information above would be captured when an aspiring Mercy Associate completes their Registration form (Appendix E). This form is a confidential document. It should be kept by a designated person in the local group in a secure place and a copy forwarded to the Network Facilitator.

Commitment and Renewal Statements: A copy of each Mercy Associate's initial commitment statement and any subsequent renewal of commitment statement should be retained by the local group, because these are different for each person.

Correspondence: Any formal correspondence should be kept by the local group, including emails that are formal in nature. This record keeping can be in a digital form, but where this option is chosen, it is important to check that the computer involved has back-up installed. Please check the section on Mercy Associates letterhead to note the format and intended use of the letterhead.

When there is a change of personnel who will be looking after the group's records, the existing records should be handed on to them. Once per year, these records should be forwarded to the Network Facilitator for inclusion in the ISMAPNG archives. Advice will be provided on which records should be kept. The need to protect the private information of Mercy Associates must always be kept in mind, so that records are only made available to those whose role warrants them accessing the information.

3.4 Financial Matters

Most Mercy Associates groups deal with cash. **There are only two purposes for which money may be received:**

1. Fundraising to donate to MercyWorks or another charitable work. It is important to note that groups cannot fundraise for an ISMAPNG programme or ministry (for legal reasons), however MercyWorks is a separate legal entity so fundraising for it is encouraged.
2. Collecting small contributions at meetings to cover their group's incidental expenses such as hospitality costs, to make a donation to a guest speaker's ministry, postage, etc.

It is important that monies collected and spent are handled responsibly and that those who offer to be the treasurer are following sound procedures. **A record of income and expenditure should be kept,**

preferably presented at each meeting and included in the minutes. Expenditure should be approved by two people; and monies collected at meetings should be counted by two people.

A written or digital record should be kept of all monies collected at meetings or through other activities such as fund-raising; this record should also include all payments made, whether in cash or via internet banking. As indicated above, it is good practice to have a second person check on the amount collected to verify the accuracy of counting – this also serves as a protection to the treasurer to avoid having total responsibility for funds resting with one person.

Details are provided below for groups that would like to operate a bank account. Regardless of whether there is a bank account operated for the group, there will be some cash kept on hand. It is essential for each group to establish protocols about who is authorised to spend the group's money and what approval is needed to do so. Where there are small expenses met by Mercy Associates, the group may want to operate a petty cash fund with a float. Where this option is chosen, the usual practice of having receipts / dockets provided to support a payment request should be followed, with the person making the claim writing the details of the items purchased on the receipt and signing it.

It is important that the cost of operating each local Mercy Associates group is met by that group. These costs may include:

- **Stationery and postage.** There may be costs of paper and photocopying for meeting resources, sending cards to those who are unwell, bereaved, on the birth of a new baby, etc.; and where members do not have internet access, their newsletters will need to be posted.
- **Phone calls.** Generally, Mercy Associates who make phone calls on behalf of their group are happy to do so without being reimbursed, but this should not be assumed.
- **Hospitality.** In most groups the Mercy Associates themselves run a roster to provide refreshments for morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, etc., however there may be special occasions where outside food and beverages are purchased.
- **Resources for prayer and reflection.** Often Mercy Associates groups are able to borrow suitable books, CDs, DVDs, etc., for use in preparing prayer and reflection periods for meetings from their local Sisters of Mercy. Some groups may wish to purchase some core resources of their own, especially if they are in a location where no Sisters are resident.
- **Guest speaker honorarium.** Some groups are in the habit of providing an honorarium to guest speakers, and generally these are passed on to the organisation they represent. It is always wise to confirm when a booking for a guest speaker is made whether there is any expectation that an honorarium will be paid.
- **Resources for works the group undertakes.** Some groups are involved in making products or assembling packs of items for specific needs. Sometimes the items to be packed or what is needed to make up products are donated to the Mercy Associates group, but some groups need to purchase what they will work with, e.g., toiletries to make up packs of toiletries, wool to knit winter clothing, fabric to make clothing or craft items.
- **Travel.** If Mercy Associates travel to other groups, seminars, etc., this is usually considered to be an individual cost. If there are occasions where they are representing their local Mercy Associates group and this has been endorsed by that group, some contribution towards the cost of fuel, accommodation, etc., may be negotiated, but this must be done in advance of the travel.

In all Mercy Associates groups, it is anticipated that those who have the financial means to do so will contribute to their local group.

Where groups take up a collection at meetings, it is important to respect the situation of Mercy Associates who are receiving government benefits due to age, disability, etc., and have limited means to support their local group. They should only be asked to contribute what they can afford to, and should not experience hardship or embarrassment because of any perceived pressure to provide money for their group.

Groups are welcome to ask ISMAPNG to open a bank account on their behalf if they would like to do so. It is recommended that if a group has funds of above \$500, they should operate a bank account rather than keep cash above this amount. **It is important that groups do not endeavour to open bank accounts independent of ISMAPNG.** If your group would like to open a bank account, please contact the Mercy Associates Executive Officer who will ask for various details, including proposed signatories, so the account can be set up correctly.

Where a group has a bank account, the account will be named for the location of the group, e.g., ISMAPNG - Mercy Associates Bathurst; ISMAPNG - Mercy Associates Gladstone, etc. Three people should be made signatories with two required to approve any payment or withdrawal. A third signatory allows for the situation where one is away and unable to sign. Where possible, internet banking will make it easier to manage the account, and if this approach is used, it is still recommended that three Associates be able to operate the account.

If the group is fundraising for MercyWorks, the best option is to deposit the funds collected directly into their bank account. The details are:

Account Name: Mercy Works Ltd (MWL)

BSB: 032 060

Account Number: 37-2339

The Sisters of Mercy have supported Mercy Associates groups over the decades and continue to do so today. ISMAPNG has provided financial support over the last few years to enable the renewal of the Mercy Associates movement to be resourced, and they remain committed to funding Network Facilitator positions for the foreseeable future. Other than this, ISMAPNG does not provide funding for any of the activities of Mercy Associates groups, unless this is specifically agreed in advance by the Community Leader concerned and notified to the group(s) concerned.

Mercy Associates remain fully responsible for their personal financial affairs, and their involvement as a Mercy Associate is on a voluntary basis. ISMAPNG holds no financial responsibility to any Mercy Associate.

3.5 Safety, Risk and Insurance for Mercy Associates

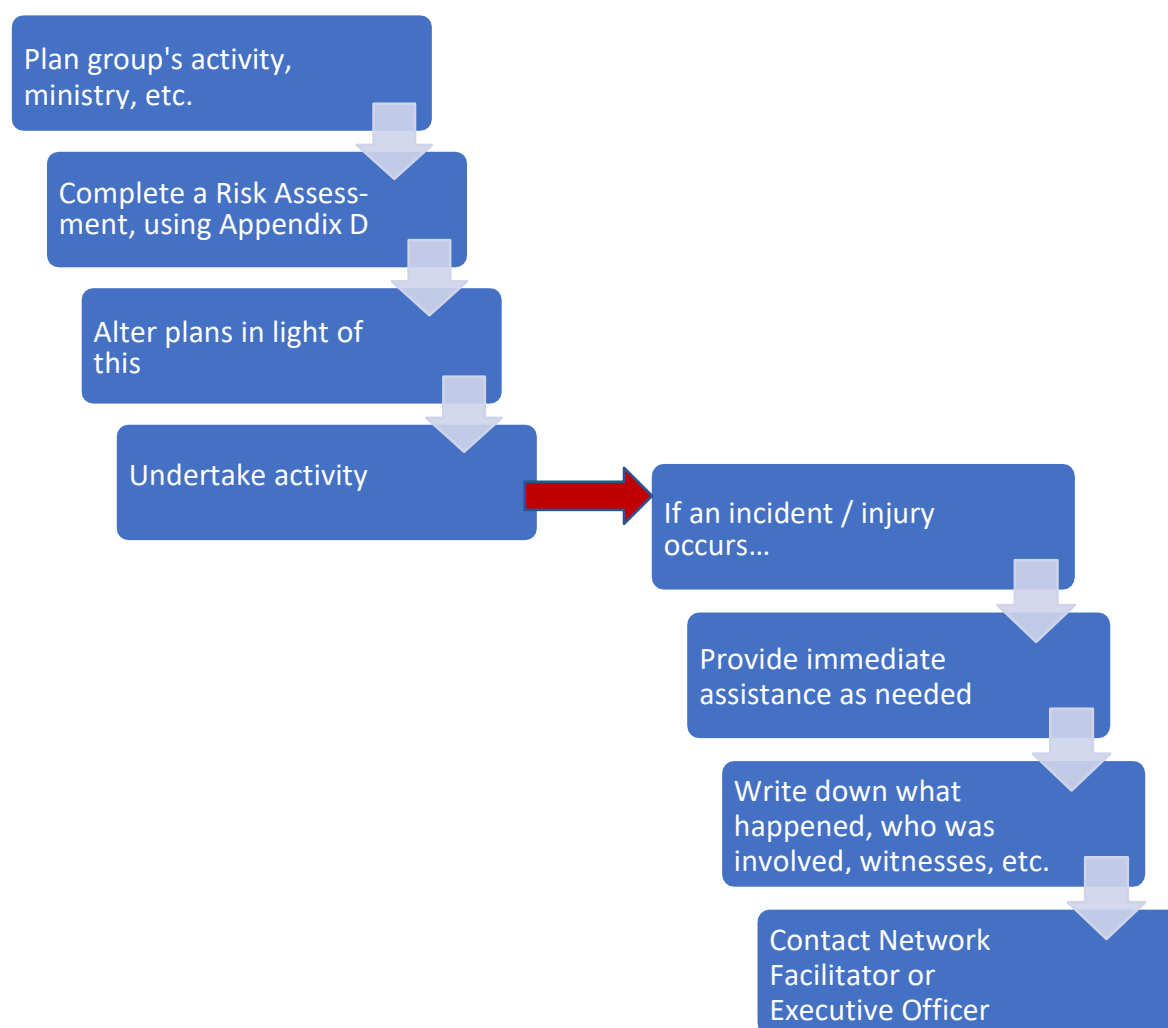
Mercy Associates are volunteers of ISMAPNG. As responsible adults, it is important that Mercy Associates undertake all of their activities and ministries alert to the risks that might be involved, whether to themselves, others in the group, those they are helping, or members of the public.

ISMAPNG holds an insurance policy that includes cover for 'authorised voluntary workers'. Like all insurance policies, there are set requirements about what the insurer needs to know in advance, and what it will and will not provide cover for. Activities can operate anywhere in Australia as this is covered by the insurance policy.

Cover is only provided for activities undertaken with the knowledge and consent of ISMAPNG. This means groups must be aware of all activities and ministries they are involved with

as Mercy Associates. It is essential for the group to keep the Network Facilitator or Mercy Associates Executive Officer up to date on what activities and ministries they are involved in so the consent of the Institute can be obtained. **Appendix C** contains a form that should be used to provide these updates. The form should be completed and forwarded by 28th February each year, and if there are changes to activities and ministries during the year, these should be notified immediately. It is important to note **the insurance cover only applies to what is being done as a Mercy Associate and does not cover any other aspect of a person's life.**

Below is a diagram to show how the risk assessment is prepared and applied, along with the response needed should an incident or injury occur.



In addition, cover is only provided where a **risk assessment** has been undertaken before the activity or ministry is undertaken. This is a valuable habit for a group to get into, because some activities and ministries might turn out to involve threats to safety that are not immediately apparent. Regardless of the insurance requirements, **the objective should always be to undertake all activities and ministries in a way that protects the safety of everyone involved so that injuries are avoided altogether.** **Appendix D** contains a template for risk assessments to be undertaken. This should be completed in writing before a decision is made to go ahead with an activity or ministry. If significant risks are identified the group must decide whether to proceed or not, in consultation with the Network Facilitator or Mercy Associates Executive Officer. Sometimes risks can be managed if

particular strategies are put in place, but on the other hand some risks will be so serious in their impact that the activity should not go ahead.

It is also important to note **what is not covered** by the Institute's insurance policy:

- Use of motor vehicles, watercraft or other forms of transport owned by Mercy Associates or other persons is not covered – Mercy Associates need to claim on their own insurance policy if damage occurs.
- Activities and ministries undertaken for other organisations, e.g., helping with a soup van for St Vincent de Paul, as this is a different organisation. Similarly, helping with a parish activity (e.g., taking communion to the housebound), would not be covered because the parish is a separate organisation.
- Activities or ministries that ISMAPNG is not aware of, even if they are being done as a Mercy Associate.
- Travel you undertake as a Mercy Associate, whether local to meetings, etc., or further away for other purposes. This includes motor vehicles, public transport, air travel, etc. You will need to ensure you have other insurance that will cover any harm during such travel.

In short, Mercy Associates, when undertaking activities or ministries in that capacity, must think carefully, in advance, about safety for what they are considering. They must take every reasonable care to avoid accident or injury. It is important to personally manage one's actions to avoid harm to anyone and ensure what will be done complies with legal obligations, local by-laws or any other regulations that might be relevant to what is planned.

Mercy Associates are encouraged to hold health insurance and income protection insurance (if applicable) of their own.

If an incident does occur where there is injury or harm, it is essential to contact the Network Facilitator or Mercy Associates Executive Officer immediately as soon as the situation has been dealt with. What happened will need to be documented so that if an insurance claim will be lodged, there is an accurate record of what took place and the injuries or harm that resulted. This record will also assist in reviewing what led to the incident occurring, so that prevention is possible in the future.

3.6 Legal Responsibilities

The Mercy Associates movement is sponsored by ISMAPNG, and this provides it with a formal link to the Catholic Church. This connection with the Sisters of Mercy leads to a responsibility on the part of Mercy Associates to always conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful of ISMAPNG and its objectives and ministries. The Conduct and Responsibilities section in this Handbook (2.2) and ISMAPNG Code of Conduct (2.3) provide a description of the expectations of Mercy Associates, which are designed to promote harmonious and effective relationships among Mercy Associates and to uphold the good reputation of Mercy Associates in the broader community.

It is important to note that **if ministry by individuals or a group involves contact with children or adolescents (those under 18 years of age), a Working with Children card will be needed**. These are applied for and issued on an individual basis, and the application process involves a police check of any previous issues concerning contact with young people. In some states, there are ministries with vulnerable adults that also require a police check. These requirements vary from state to state, and the Mercy office in Alphington (Melbourne) can advise on this (03 9499 1577). If there are groups meeting at schools during hours that students are present, a Working with Children card

should be obtained. As well, if a school-based group is meeting, it is assumed that attending have a Working with Children card (staff) or may be exempt (parents). However this should be checked to ensure compliance.

3.7 Privacy Legislation

As a Mercy Associate you may come across information which is private and relates to other individuals in the Mercy Associates movement or others in the communities with whom you work. You will need to respect the privacy of this information and not act in a way that discloses personal details to any other individual or organisation. You will also need to familiarise yourself with the Privacy Policy common to all Mercy ministries and available at:

<http://institute.mercy.org.au/privacy-policy/>

To foster trusting relationships and enable our ministry to thrive, it is essential that we safeguard people's rights and respect their personal and private information at all times. If you have any questions about privacy or expected behaviours as part of your Mercy Associates group, please contact your Network Facilitator.

Prepared by Nicki Patten, Legal Counsel, ISMAPNG

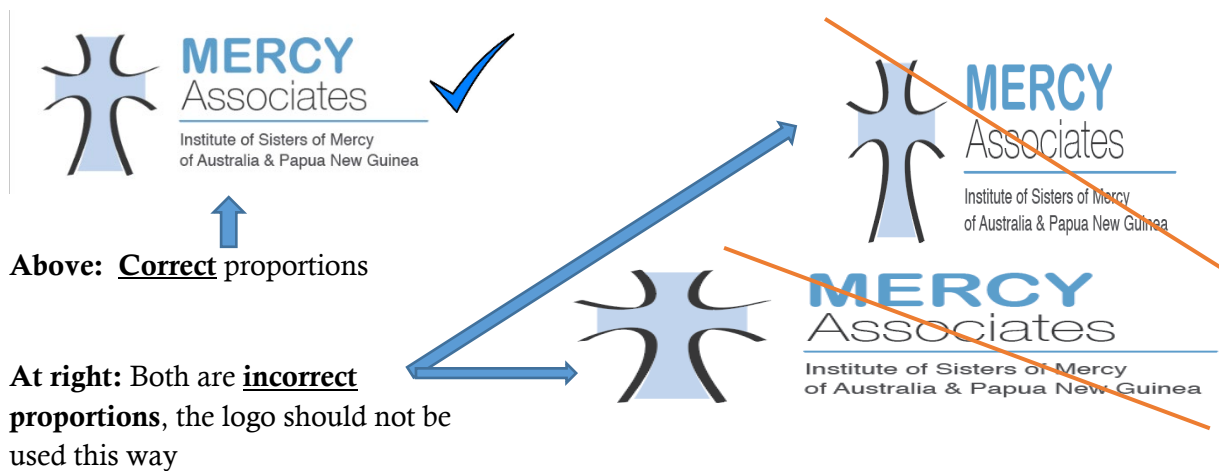
3.8 Letterhead, Logo and their Use

Letterhead has been designed for the use of Mercy Associates groups. This is in the form of a template sent by email to each group and should be sourced from the Executive Officer. The letterhead template is designed to be filled in with the particular details of the group, e.g., address, etc. and once this is set up each group will have its own letterhead. It is important not to alter the content of the main template – items such as the description of Mercy Associates, the ISMAPNG ABN, etc., are included to ensure the right understanding of Mercy Associates by those who receive correspondence.

By way of use of letterhead, it is important to remember that all correspondence reflects on the reputation of the Institute, so high standards of professionalism need to be used. It is also important to appreciate that undertakings made on letterhead by an individual Mercy Associate or group may turn out to be binding, in a legal and financial sense, on the Institute overall. Care needs to be taken to use letterhead responsibly.

The logo similarly requires responsible use, because it identifies ISMAPNG as well as Mercy Associates.

When the Mercy Associates logo will be used on printed materials for local groups, care should be taken to preserve its proper shape, with examples of correct and incorrect use provided below:



The Mercy Cross used by Sisters of Mercy around the world in their badges is reserved only for the use of Sisters of Mercy and is not available to be used by Mercy Associates or any other persons.

3.9 Mercy Associates Badge

When a Mercy Associate makes their first commitment at a Commitment Ceremony, they will receive a Mercy Associates badge. Over the years, these badges have been of special significance to Associates, and are often a cherished possession.

Mercy Associates are encouraged to wear their badge to their meetings, and may also wish to wear them when they are undertaking ministries or other activities connected with being a Mercy Associate. If these activities are in non-religious locations, sensitivity may be needed to determine whether it is appropriate to wear the badge.

3.10 Printed and Digital Materials about Mercy Associates

Vision Statement: Copies of the Vision Statement have been printed as a colour A4 size single page. These are available to all groups, and a copy should be given to every Mercy Associate who has made their commitment. They can also be presented during the formation period for aspiring Mercy Associates. These statements are for individual reflection about being a Mercy Associate, but are also a resource that can be used for discussion and reflection at Mercy Associates meetings. Copies of the Vision Statement can be obtained by contacting your Network Facilitator.



Brochure: A DL size colour brochure (A4 folded in three) is available which is an introduction to Mercy Associates for those with little or no prior knowledge of the movement. It is useful to place in the notices area of churches (with permission), or in the staffroom at Mercy workplaces (with permission). The contact details are not local to your group, so individual groups might prefer to place a sticker over them contact details and include their local contact details – a name, phone number and email contact, so that interested people within the area can make contact with a local person rather than via more distant contacts. Copies of the brochure are available via your Network Facilitator and the brochure is on the ISMAPNG website <https://institute.mercy.org.au/become-involved/become-a-mercy-associate/>.



Bookmarks: Mercy Associates bookmarks are available, and these can be useful to promote the Mercy Associates

movement as well as being given to Mercy Associates

for their own use. Copies are available from the Institute Centre in Stanmore (see last page of this handbook).

Webpage: The ISMAPNG website contains a screen that provides information about Mercy Associates, <https://institute.mercy.org.au/become-involved/become-a-mercy-associate/>. This

Administrative Handbook, the **Formation Resource** and **brochure** are available via a link on this screen. The Mercy Associates newsletter, *Many Paths*, can also be accessed via a link on the Mercy Associates screen. This web presence on the Institute website will be the only social media presence used for Mercy Associates. Groups are asked not to develop a social media presence of their own, whether a website, Facebook page, twitter feed, Instagram or any other social media outlet. All such usages are at risk of compromising the reputation of the Sisters of Mercy because of the strong connection between them and Mercy Associates.



4.0 Groups

4.1 Establishing a new Mercy Associates Group

The establishment of a new Mercy Associates group can be undertaken when four or more women and men come to the view that they have a deep personal commitment to mercy and an interest in sharing this with a group of like-minded people. The Network Facilitator will endeavour to visit the workplace, parish or other setting to discuss the aspirations of the group and help plan how they can prepare themselves to establish a group. There is also the option of establishing an online group.

If there is a Mercy Associates group located sufficiently close to provide support, then some Associates from that group will work with the aspiring Mercy Associates group to facilitate the initial formation programme with them, and generally guide them through the process that will allow them to discern whether a new Mercy Associates group is the most appropriate option to pursue.

It may be that there is no Mercy Associates group within a practical distance, and where this happens, the Network Facilitator for that area will work with the aspiring Mercy Associates to undertake the above steps. Mercy Associates who can provide some support may be sought from other groups and their interaction with the new group may be by Skype, Zoom, phone and email. This may lead to the establishment of an ongoing link to the group that provided support, because a newly established group may wish to seek information and guidance from those already established.

With the growth in usage of online communications, it is also possible to establish a new group as an online group. This is appropriate when the candidates do not live in the one location. If you are aware of people interested in becoming Mercy Associates who live away from existing groups, please contact your Network Facilitator and they will liaise with the candidates and set up an appropriate schedule for them to undertake the formation programme online.

Once the initial formation process has been completed, discernment is needed for each of the aspiring Mercy Associates, as well as for the establishment of a new group of Mercy Associates. Where the new group is established, a liturgy will be held at which the commitment ceremony for each of the Mercy Associates candidates will be held, and an initial section added to the ceremony to establish a new Mercy Associates group. The Network Facilitator will usually attend this ceremony, and the regional Community Leader or her delegate, possibly a Sister of Mercy living locally, will attend the ceremony. Other local Sisters should also be invited. Where an online group is being established, the commitment ceremony may need to be held online, with those involved all gathering via Zoom or other similar technology. This will be coordinated by the Network Facilitator, to ensure the relevant personnel can be available.

4.2 Role of those supporting aspiring Mercy Associates

Women and men who are interested in becoming a Mercy Associate initially meet with a member of an existing group or Network Facilitator to discuss their interest, and have the movement explained to them. If possible, it is beneficial to invite interested people to come along to a Mercy Associates meeting or other gathering (meeting over coffee is an option), so they can gain a better appreciation of what being a Mercy Associate involves – a ‘come and see’ period before a decision to undertake the formation programme is made. If they believe they may be called to become a Mercy Associate, the group is asked to assign two of their members to journey with the aspiring Mercy Associate while they undertake the initial formation or preparation process. The particular tasks they will undertake include:

- Work through the formation programme in the Formation Resource with the candidate, explaining and discussing various topics and responding to questions the candidate may have;
- Additional to this, to meet from time to time during the initial formation process to discuss how the candidate sees things at that time and whether any additional support is needed;
- During the various discussions that take place, provide feedback to the candidate that may help them in their deliberations about becoming a Mercy Associate;
- As much as possible, attend Mercy Associates gatherings with the candidate to familiarise them with the workings of Mercy Associates groups and provide the opportunity for them to meet other Mercy Associates;
- Consider the readiness of the candidate to make a Mercy Associates commitment, and if there are any reservations, inform their group's coordinating committee and the Network Facilitator;
- If there are any reservations, communicate these, with sensitivity, to the candidate(s);
- Should the discernment process lead to a commitment being made, attend the ceremony and present the candidate to the Mercy Associates group;
- Remain in a support and encouragement role for the first twelve months after the new Mercy Associate makes their commitment;
- Withdraw from the process if they come to the view that they cannot work successfully with the aspiring Mercy Associate and arrange for another Associate to take their place.

The possible outcomes of the discernment process are 'yes', 'no', or 'maybe at a later time'. For candidates who are accepted to become a Mercy Associate, the final task is to brief them more fully about participation in a Mercy Associates group and prepare them for their commitment ceremony. Where the discernment outcome is 'maybe at a later time', care needs to be taken to ensure the candidate is at peace with this decision, and feels welcome to approach the Mercy Associates group at a future time should they feel they again wish to become a Mercy Associate.

It is possible that there will be times when a candidate has an interest in becoming a Mercy Associate but does not have the support of those who have guided them through the formation programme. This needs sensitivity and will usually be communicated to the candidate by those involved. It would also be helpful to discuss this situation with the Network Facilitator. Ideally such a discussion with a candidate should be approached from the perspective that God's call to each person is unique, and while there may not be a call to become a Mercy Associate, there will be other ways for the candidate to serve God. A brief record of the discussion should be attached to the Expression of Interest form.

It is important to note that when then those aged 16 or 17 express an interest in becoming a Mercy Associate, those who will conduct their formation programme will need to obtain a Working with Children card. Candidates aged 16 or 17 are only able to join groups operating within schools.

4.3 Commitment Ceremony

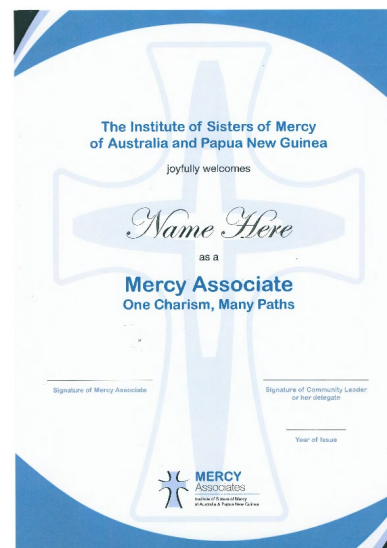
Once the discernment process has been completed and a decision is made to become a Mercy Associate, a formal commitment is made. This takes place at a local ceremony, hosted by the Mercy Associates group the aspiring Associate will join (as indicated above, for an online group, the commitment ceremony is also likely to be an online gathering). The Mercy Associates who have been mentoring the candidate attend this ceremony and present the new Mercy Associate(s) to the group. For some groups, one commitment ceremony is held each year, however other groups hold a ceremony when one or more new Associates are ready to make their commitment. The Community Leader or her delegate will usually attend. She will accept the commitment statement and present the

badge and certificate to each candidate. Local Sisters of Mercy should be invited to attend, and groups may also wish to invite spouses and family members to be present for this special ceremony. A list of the elements of the Commitment Ceremony are contained in Appendix I.

The commitment is a public statement, and a template of what is entailed in the commitment is provided in Appendix G. This provides the commitment asked of all Mercy Associates (based on loyalty to ISMAPNG and the Mercy Associates Vision Statement) and a brief description of the particular ministry the aspiring Mercy Associate has chosen to be involved in. Note that there is a section of the commitment statement that is read aloud at the ceremony, however the section on the individual ministries of each candidate are read by them in silence.

A sample of the certificate presented to each Mercy Associate when they make their commitment is shown in this section.

Details of how to request certificates and badges needed for a commitment ceremony are contained in Appendix H. Please note it is important to send names to the Network Facilitator at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the ceremony – three weeks is preferable.



4.4 Renewal of Commitment

Mercy Associates are asked to renew their commitment from time to time, and this should take place at least once every three years but should not be more often than annually. This renewal of commitment takes place in the presence of the Mercy Associates group they belong to.

For many Mercy Associates groups, initial commitment and renewal take place at one combined ceremony, and this is a matter for each group to determine.

A liturgy should be prepared whenever a commitment or renewal will take place so that the ceremony is a prayerful occasion. A sample of what might be included in this liturgy is contained in Appendix I.

4.5 Transfers

It is commonplace in our society for people to relocate to another town or city. Where this happens for a Mercy Associate, they are welcome to contact the local group in their new location and seek to join that group. The Network Facilitator will be able to provide information on where the nearest group is and who its contact person is. In the spirit of Mercy hospitality, local groups are asked to welcome newcomers to their group, mindful that they will broaden the range of gifts present in that group. A prayer of welcome may be prayed at the first meeting of a Mercy Associate who has transferred into a new group.

4.6 Removal from a Mercy Associates Group

The principles concerning conduct and responsibilities of Mercy Associates are of the utmost importance in creating a nurturing culture of mutual respect in each group. Where they are not upheld and complaints arise, the local Mercy Associates group will respond by alerting the Mercy Associate concerned to the negative impact of their words or actions. The **ISMAPNG Code of**

Conduct (2.3 above) states the standards of conduct required of all Mercy Associates and also indicates conduct that would not be acceptable if the Code of Conduct is being upheld.

Where a Mercy Associate's words or actions are damaging to individuals, the group, ISMAPNG or others in the broader community, the matter will be discussed with them by their local group, using the Code of Conduct as a reference to establish why the words or actions are inappropriate or unacceptable. The Mercy Associate concerned will be asked to state their perspective on the issue. They may be counselled about the impact of their actions and the need to avoid harmful words and conduct in the future.

Where the matter is serious and/or of long-standing duration, the local group will refer the matter to the Network Facilitator. On behalf of the Institute, the Network Facilitator may engage a mediator to work with the Mercy Associate and their group to seek a solution. Mercy Associates groups themselves should not take this step of engaging a mediator, nor should they ask a Sister of Mercy to do so – once a matter is serious and is harmful to the functioning of the group, the Network Facilitator should be contacted to follow up. The objective is to identify if there is a matter that needs discussion with others to seek a resolution, and/or to obtain an undertaking from the Mercy Associate to avoid future conduct that is damaging.

If a Mercy Associate refuses to participate in such discussion or mediation and/or continues to speak or behave in a manner that is harmful to the group or others, the Network Facilitator may formally terminate their involvement in the Mercy Associates movement. Where this occurs, it will be communicated in writing and the ISMAPNG Professional Standards Officer will be informed. Some breaches of the conduct standards may also constitute civil or criminal offences and may result in civil action or prosecution.

4.7 Mercy Associate Honorary

Provision has been made for Mercy Associates who, due to illness and/or infirmity, cannot attend a local group, or whose local group has closed, to continue as a Mercy Associate. These Mercy Associates will be designated as a **Mercy Associate Honorary**. The purpose of this is to acknowledge and celebrate their prior commitment as an Associate. Becoming a Mercy Associate Honorary will allow them to retain their blessings as a Mercy Associate without needing to make a recommitment every three years or attend meetings, as indicated below:

- **Mercy Associates Honorary** continue to be Mercy Associates, responding to their call to mercy.
- They will have been committed Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG for some time – at least ten years though there may be occasions where a shorter duration is warranted.
- They are no longer able to attend meetings or undertake active ministries even though there is or has been a local Mercy Associates group. This is usually due to illness and/or health conditions. In this sense they are *non-active* Mercy Associates.
- Their sole ministry in the name of Mercy Associates is *prayer ministry*.
- Mercy Associates Honorary '*offer prayerful support for the flourishing of the Mercy charism*' (from The Mercy Associates Vision in Practice section 'Ensuring a balance between contemplation and action in the Mercy tradition').
- They continue to wear their badges but do not continue to make recommitments.
- They will receive a certificate from ISMAPNG confirming their Honorary status.
- Each candidate to become a Mercy Associate Honorary will liaise with their Network Facilitator or their local group if it is continuing to discuss this option.

- They are exempt from the Mercy Associates Safeguarding training because they are not undertaking active ministries.

Mercy Associates Honorary members will be supported:

- Through the sharing of *Many Paths*, the Mercy Associates newsletter
- Receive prayer resources from their local group (if there is one), the relevant Network Facilitator and/or the Executive Officer
- Receive most emails that are sent to all Mercy Associates groups
- Receive communications from the group they were active in, if the group is still operating, or their Network Facilitator.

Discernment process and approvals

Local groups will be aware of any Mercy Associates who are no longer able to attend meetings. They will be encouraged to liaise with their Network Facilitator to discuss who these Associates are. An approach would be to wait until an Associate has missed a few meetings (perhaps about three), though no hard and fast rule about this is needed – some flexibility and sensitivity would be needed when offering Honorary status, to accommodate the needs of each Associate. An individual Associate may also choose to request this option. Where this happens, a representative from their group would discuss this with the Network Facilitator.

Network Facilitators will be aware of groups that have closed and can approach their members with the Honorary option.

The Network Facilitator will arrange for the preparation of the Mercy Associates Honorary certificate. If there is someone from the local group who can visit the Mercy Associate and present the certificate, that is the best option. If the local group has closed, the Network Facilitator will phone the Associate and notify them that their Honorary certificate will be posted to them.

These conversations are a discernment process in which the person is encouraged to discern whether becoming a Mercy Associate Honorary is the best response to their call to mercy.

4.8 Withdrawal from Mercy Associates Commitment

The commitment made by Mercy Associates is one that is intended to be renewed from time to time (i.e., it is not perpetual), with the break between renewal ceremonies no longer than three years' duration. One reason for this practice of ongoing renewal is that an individual's life circumstances may change, and they may also become keen to serve via another means.

Where a Mercy Associate decides they do not wish to continue to be an Associate, they should inform the coordinator of their local Mercy Associates group. This may be in writing, and it will be acknowledged in writing by the local group. Where an Associate chooses to leave, the local group may ask the Associate leaving if they would like a short period of prayer at a meeting to close off their relationship with Mercy Associates. There may also be value in offering an exit discussion between the Mercy Associate and one or two others in the group, so that any matters that might be on their mind can be raised and addressed.

Once a Mercy Associate has left the movement, it is possible that at a future time they may develop a renewed interest in being a Mercy Associate. Should this occur, they should contact the group they were part of (or in their new location if they have moved), and discuss their wish to renew their commitment. In this situation, a short period of formation and discernment may help to clarify their desire to become a Mercy Associate again.

4.9 Closing a Mercy Associates Group

Mercy Associates groups that have been operating for a long period of time may find they have not recruited new members and will reach a point where they wish to wind up their group. Similarly, an already small group may need to close if one or two of its members relocate and there are fewer than four remaining members.

The decision to close a group should involve a period of discernment. Among the matters to be considered is whether there is any prospect of recruiting new, including younger members to the group and if so, what steps should be taken to achieve this. If it is apparent that the group does not have growth potential, consideration should be given to whether there are other Mercy Associates groups in the region that members could transfer to.

The closure of a group should be notified to the Network Facilitator. In addition, a liturgy should be held to give thanks for the life of the Mercy Associates group over the years, and the Community Leader and/or local Sisters of Mercy should be invited to attend this.

Once the group has closed, all of its records should be forwarded to the Network Facilitator so they can become part of the ISMAPNG archives.

If there are some Mercy Associates in the group who would like to remain part of the movement, they may be able to be put in touch with the nearest other group and join their communications list. This would enable them to be included in prayer rosters, receive invitations to meetings and gatherings, etc. They may also wish to join an online group.

5.0 Support and Structure

5.1 Support and Structure for Mercy Associates in Australia and Papua New Guinea

The Mercy Associates movement has a coordination structure that serves Mercy Associates groups. The coordination structure includes the following three elements, and each is described in the sections below:

- Individual, local Mercy Associates groups
- The Mercy Associates Leadership Group
- Executive Officer and Network Facilitators.

5.2 Local Mercy Associates Groups

The heart of the Mercy Associates movement is the groups that form based on location, whether this is in a workplace, a parish, a larger region, online, or whatever suits the needs of the group and enables them to become a small community of faith. These groups are the place in which gatherings, prayer, formation, community, companionship and service take place. Each group is unique because of the women and men who are its members at any given time, and their uniqueness will also be a product of their location and its circumstances and needs.

During their preparation period, each aspiring Mercy Associate will be connected to a local group where there is one, and this linking up might be done by the Network Facilitator. They will be invited to attend the local group's gatherings as a means of discerning whether this way of living mercy in the company of others who share that commitment will nurture them.

Once a commitment ceremony has been held, each Mercy Associate will formally become part of an existing group, which usually will be a group that meets face-to-face but might be an online group. Usually this will be the one nearest to where they live or where they work but there may be circumstances that make it more effective for a Mercy Associate to be part of a different group. Whether a group meets face-to-face or online, being a member of a specific Mercy Associates group will remain a core part of being a Mercy Associate.

5.3 Mercy Associates Leadership Group

The Institute-wide network of Mercy Associates groups is served by the Mercy Associates Leadership Group (MALG), which has representatives from a number of Mercy Associates groups. The Mercy Associates Leadership Group is appointed by the Institute Leadership Team and is a voluntary group drawn from various Mercy Associates groups.

The Mercy Associates Leadership Group:

- Gathers annually to discuss the progress and needs of the Mercy Associates movement and provide advice to the Executive Officer and Network Facilitators on options and strategies to strengthen the movement and support groups
- Maintains links with the Institute Leadership Team, Community Leaders or their delegates
- Reviews the Mercy Associates *Administrative Handbook* and *Formation Resource* (biennial reviews in place)
- Provides a member for interview panels when Network Facilitators are being recruited

- Supports the work of the Executive Officer and Network Facilitators.

Their role is advisory, with the tasks being undertaken by the Executive Officer or Network Facilitators.

5.4 Network Facilitators

There are part-time facilitators employed by ISMAPNG to provide support to Mercy Associates groups, located in Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria. Additional to this, the Mercy Associates Leadership Group provides input and support to the network facilitators, whose role is to:

- Promote the vision and framework
- Support emerging and existing Mercy Associates groups
- Assist with resourcing and support for local Mercy Associates groups as requested, including support for Mercy Associates who are guiding aspiring Mercy Associates through their formation period
- Maintain a database of Mercy Associates groups, including their contact person
- Assist with promotion and communications re Mercy Associates, including the Mercy Associates newsletter and website updates
- Liaise with ISMAPNG Community Leaders in their region or their delegates
- Monitor and deliver Safeguarding and other related compulsory training for Mercy Associates.
- Prepare a monthly prayer and reflection resource to be emailed to groups
- Facilitate a monthly online prayer gathering available to all Mercy Associates.

Network facilitators are a resource available to local Mercy Associates groups to support and guide them in coordinating the activities of their own group, and also encourage them to look beyond their own group and location to link to the broader Mercy Associates community. They are also available to provide formation input from time to time for each group.

Groups are welcome to contact their regional Network Facilitator for any of the above matters. Their contact details are on the Mercy Associates page of the ISMAPNG website.

The Mercy Associates Executive Officer, who is one of the four, undertakes overall management and planning for Mercy Associates, such as preparing budgets, supervising the network facilitators, liaison with ISMAPNG personnel.

5.5 Communications

A communication system is in place to share information, build relationships and support the network of Mercy Associates groups. Key methods of communication include:

- A Mercy Associates 'screen' on the **ISMAPNG website** (<https://institute.mercy.org.au/become-involved/become-a-mercy-associate/>). This screen has links to newsletters and resources such as the Administrative Handbook and Formation Resource.
- This **Administrative Handbook** and the **Formation Resource** provide the common framework that all Mercy Associates groups are asked to adhere to. This means there is common ground among the groups, though there remains ample opportunity for groups to

develop their own identity. Both are published on the website and are not available in printed form.

- A Mercy Associates newsletter, **Many Paths**, is published quarterly. This is available via the ISMAPNG website at the address shown above. Mercy Associates who do not have access to the internet are welcome to request that their local group mails a copy to them.
- Local Mercy Associates groups may choose to prepare a newsletter of their own, which some groups have done for some time.
- The Executive Officer and Network Facilitators will encourage local Mercy Associates groups to share their ideas and activities with other groups, such as prayer resources, practical ministry ideas etc., and to take an interest in the initiatives of other groups.
- The Executive Officer and Network Facilitators will gather information required by ISMAPNG on individual Mercy Associates, such as a register of those who have made a commitment, safeguarding training, etc. This information is treated as confidential and is stored in a restricted access area on the ISMAPNG server.

5.6 Links with other Mercy Associate Groups

The geographical space covered by ISMAPNG is huge, and there are a number of Mercy Associates groups within Australia and one in Timor Leste. In Papua New Guinea, a Mercy Friends group operates and it is envisaged that Mercy Associates groups or something similar will form in the future.

Groups are encouraged to form links with other groups, whether near or far from their own group. Most groups have one or more members who have internet access, and this makes contact with other groups an easy and rapid option. The benefits of such relationships forming include being part of an extended community of Mercy Associates groups, which is a great benefit when the relative isolation of many Australian locations is considered. As well, forming links with other groups allows groups to share ideas about prayer, their ministries, resources they find helpful, and so on.

When Mercy Associates are travelling and will visit a location where there is a Mercy Associates group, they may want to contact that group in advance to see if there is a meeting or other gathering being held while they are there. Groups are encouraged to welcome such visits as a valuable way to learn more about other groups and their ministries.

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A

ISMAPNG Chapter Statement, 2017 - 2023

The second Institute Chapter took place in 2017. It is at the Chapter, a meeting of delegates from among the Sisters of Mercy of ISMAPNG, that a process of discernment is undertaken to develop the Chapter Statement for the next six years. The renewal of the Chapter Statement at Chapter gatherings by the Institute discerns and responds to the signs of the times.

The 2017 Chapter Statement will be available at www.institute.mercy.org.au/mercyinaction in December 2017.

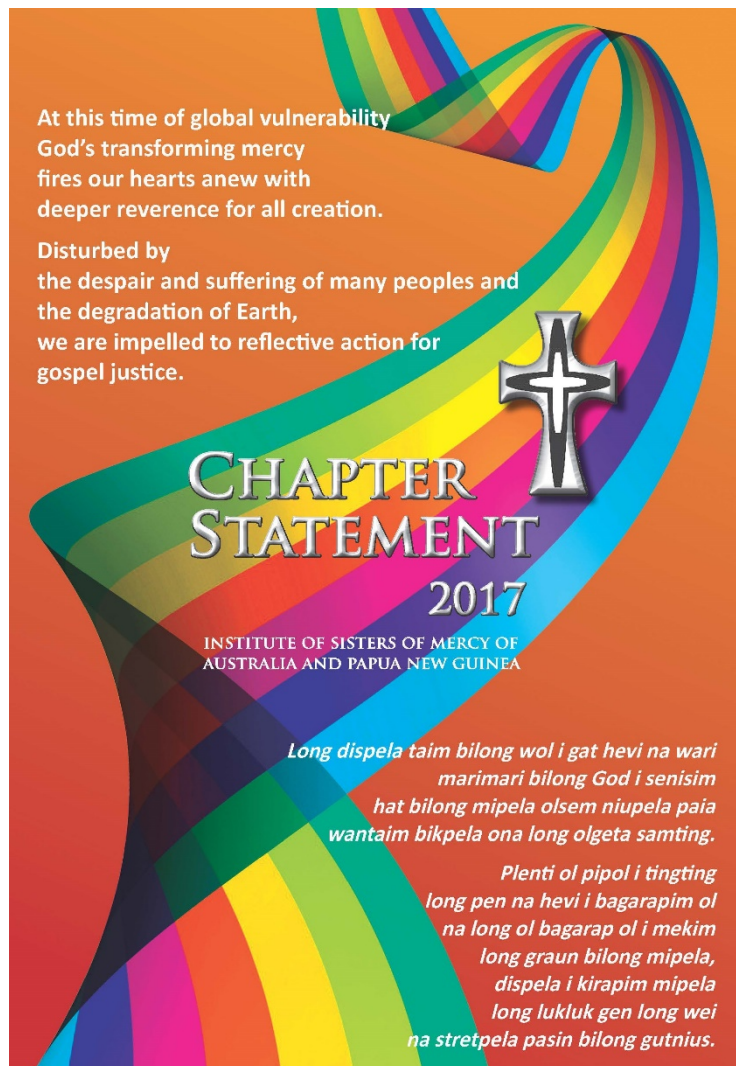


Image from ISMAPNG

Appendix B



CHARTER to ESTABLISH the MERCY ASSOCIATES MOVEMENT

Preamble

God's mercy is present from age to age. In the nineteenth century Catherine McAuley responded in a merciful way to the desperate social needs of her time by founding the Sisters of Mercy to serve those in need and improve their life circumstances. Throughout her life, Catherine worked in partnership with like-minded others who also wanted to respond to the suffering around them. Among the lay women and men who worked alongside Catherine and Sisters of Mercy over the decades, and who continue to do so now, are some who sense a personal call to strengthen their commitment to living mercy through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

In Australia and other places, a movement named Mercy Associates has been established. Many of the congregations that formed the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea in 2011 were conducting Mercy Associates groups, and these are important in extending the reach of mercy beyond what the Sisters themselves can achieve. The Institute wishes to continue this sponsorship of Mercy Associates, supporting existing groups and seeking to establish additional groups.

This Charter is the founding document to formally re-establish Mercy Associates as a movement under the sponsorship of the Institute.

A. Establishment

Mercy Associates is a movement established and sponsored by the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (the Institute). It is not separately incorporated but operates as an outreach of the Institute.

B. Purpose

The purposes of Mercy Associates include:

- Providing an avenue for lay women and men to nurture and express their personal call to mercy through participation in groups of Mercy Associates;
- Sharing the charism of mercy with lay women and men, extending the legacy of the charism beyond those who are vowed members of the Institute;
- Providing encouragement to lay women and men committed to living the charism of mercy in their day to day lives;
- Fostering the spiritual formation of lay women and men and encourage their participation in service initiatives.

C. Eligibility

To become a Mercy Associate, women and men need to:

- Be baptised members of a Christian denomination
- Be 16 years of age or over
- Participate in the preparation and discernment process

- Be sponsored by two Mercy Associates (see below), who will discern the readiness and suitability of the candidate to make a commitment to be a Mercy Associate
- Make a commitment to be a Mercy Associate
- Join a Mercy Associates group
- Be lay persons, and not members of the clergy or members of religious congregations.

Sisters of Mercy, who are already members of the Institute, are not eligible to become Mercy Associates, but are welcome to participate in their activities. Mercy Associates are not members of ISMAPNG, but are part of a separate lay movement sponsored by the Institute.

D. Responsibilities of Governance

Oversee faith and conduct

The Institute Leadership Team (ILT) oversees the Mercy Associates movement, and is responsible for ensuring its integrity with respect to faith and conduct, and its faithfulness to the charism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy.

The ILT is responsible for authorising any disciplinary action that may be needed at group or individual level and will normally delegate this to a staff member working with Mercy Associates.

Mercy Associates Leadership Group

The Institute Leadership Team appoints a Mercy Associates Leadership Group to act as a reference group. Those in this group will be appointed for fixed terms and represent Mercy Associates overall, rather than the particular group of which they are a member. Terms of Reference have been endorsed by the ILT for the activities of this group.

Core Documents

The Institute Leadership Team approves core documents, including but not limited to the Vision Statement and Vision in Practice, brochure, website content, Administrative Handbook and Formation Resource.

The Mercy Associates Administrative Handbook contains the operating requirements for Mercy Associates groups and the individual Mercy Associates in them.

Employment

Where staff are engaged to work on this initiative, they are employees of ISMAPNG.

Closure

The Institute may decide to wind up the Mercy Associates movement, and should it do so, will ensure appropriate processes are in place to respect the commitment of those who have been involved.

E. Amendments to this Charter

This Charter can only be amended by the Institute Leadership Team. It is recommended that it be reviewed following each Chapter of the Institute.

Signed this day by Sr Berneice Loch RSM, Institute Leader

.....*B.M. Loch*.....

Date: 11 June 2016

Appendix C

Ministries and Activities undertaken by Mercy Associates groups

Name and location of Group:

Contact person for this form:

Year covered

Do any of the proposed ministries require a Working with Children or police check for Mercy Associates involved in the ministry?

List the ministries your group will be involved with during this period, and indicate whether a risk assessment has been completed for each of these:

Ministry or Activity and Venue where it is undertaken	Whose Activity is this? *	Risk Assessment & Date

* Is this activity organised by your Mercy Associate group themselves, or is it an activity organised by another entity, e.g., your parish, St Vincent de Paul, a local soup van, etc.?

Please complete this form and return it to the Network Facilitator by 28th February each year.

Appendix D

Risk Assessment Resource

When a group is beginning a new ministry or activity, planning a pilgrimage or fund-raising event, etc., it is essential that a risk assessment is completed so that the safety of all can be attended to and accidents and injuries avoided as far as possible. The resource below should be completed in writing before any new ministry or activity is undertaken by a Mercy Associates group. Please attach extra pages if there is not enough space.

Mercy Associates group location:	
List the person(s) responsible for organising this ministry or activity:	
List the Mercy Associate(s) who will be involved in this activity:	
Describe what the ministry or activity is, where it will take place, and what actions or work are involved:	
Dangers / hazards identified (using the tables on the following page)	Risk rating
Who are the people who may be at risk?	
What steps / actions will you take to remove or decrease the risk to a low level?	

For any risk identified as **High or Extreme**, is there anything you can do that will reduce this risk to **Low or Medium** (with steps in place to minimise these lower-level risks too)?

Is there any risk that you cannot adequately control? If so, is it **High or Extreme**, such that this activity should not go ahead?

RISK MATRIX

Consider the risks you have identified. For each one of them, rate it according to how likely it is to actually happen PLUS the level of impact on people involved. Once you have rated both of these, look up the coloured table to identify the level of risk involved.

Likelihood of danger or hazard actually occurring		Impact or Consequences of an Accident			
Almost certain	Expected to occur once a year or more frequently: multiple incidents expected	Catastrophic	Death of a volunteer or other person		
Likely	Expected to occur once every two years	Major	Permanent injury to volunteer or other person; injury requiring hospitalisation		
Moderate	Expected to occur once every five years. Some incidents have been reported.	Moderate	Volunteer or other person incapacitated for some time; medical treatment required but not hospitalised		
Unlikely	Expected to occur once every 10 years. Few reported or known incidents	Minor	Volunteer or other person incapacitated for less than 10 days; first aid treatment required		
Rare	Not expected in next 15 years. No history of incident known of	Insignificant	Minor injury; first aid needed; minimal impact		
Likelihood of danger or hazard actually occurring	Impact or Consequences of an Accident				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Frequent (almost certain)	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Probable (likely)	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Occasional (possible)	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme
Uncommon (unlikely)	Low	Low	Medium	High	Extreme
Remote (rare)	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High

Signature of one or more of the organisers:

Date:

Appendix E

Registration Form for Aspiring Mercy Associates

Name

Address

.....

Phone (home) Mobile

Work phone Email

Date of Birth Occupation

Religious Affiliation

Emergency contact (name, phone number(s))

This form should be retained by the local group, in a confidential location.

Appendix F

Expression of Interest in becoming a Mercy Associate

This is best completed during a discussion between the aspiring Mercy Associate and an existing Mercy Associate. It should be completed during the formation process as a reflection on one's interest in becoming a Mercy Associate.

Name:

I am interested in becoming a Mercy Associate because

.....
.....
.....

I believe I can contribute*

.....
.....
....., as a member of a Mercy Associates group.

** This might include attending meetings of the group; undertaking prayer and reflection regularly; undertaking a ministry of service; and engaging in ongoing personal and spiritual development activities.*

I am willing to participate in an initial preparation programme to inform me about the Mercy Associates movement and enable me to discern whether to seek to make a commitment.

I understand that this form when completed will be made available, in the strictest confidentiality, to the Mercy Associate who will guide me through the formation process; and to those in my local group who have roles that require this information to carry out their role. It will also be forwarded to ISMAPNG for their archives.

Signature Date

Appendix G

Commitment Statement

Commitment statements are comprised of some common sections that all Mercy Associates are asked to make a commitment to, plus a section unique to each Mercy Associate that describes their personal commitment to living the charism of Mercy in their own lives, including ministries they will undertake. **The following template contains the common sections that must be part of all commitment statements, then contains an area where those about to make their commitment write their personal commitment statement.**

At the Commitment Ceremony, the first section, that is common to all, is read aloud together. Then, the leader of the ceremony invites those making a commitment or renewal to silently read the individual commitments they personally are making, and to reflect on these in silence for a minute or two.

I,, have experienced God's call to Mercy, and inspired by Catherine McAuley, commit myself to being a Mercy Associate of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea.

In making/renewing this commitment I understand that I am entering into a relationship with my fellow Mercy Associates and with the Sisters of Mercy founded on a deep mutual respect for one another and for the path of mercy. I commit to upholding the core values of the Institute, the ISMAPNG Code of Conduct, the Vision Statement, practices and responsibilities of Mercy Associates.

I commit to deepening my spirituality and relationship with God, living the charism of mercy in my daily life, participating in the activities of my Mercy Associates group and undertaking compassionate service of others, giving expression to the Vision Statement of Mercy Associates.

My personal commitment as a Mercy Associate is: *(read these to yourself in silence)*

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

I commit to being a Mercy Associate for years (specify a period of at least one year and no more than three years).

Signature: Date:

Group representative: Signature:

A copy of this statement must be retained by the local group and a copy must be forwarded to the Network Facilitator.

Appendix H

Certificates and Badges: Procedures for Preparing and Despatching

Context

Certificates and badges for Mercy Associates are presented at local Commitment ceremonies. Often these are held only once per year for each group. The certificates and badges are presented by a Sister of Mercy. This will be either the Community Leader for that region or another Sister she delegates this role to if she is unable to attend the local ceremony herself.

Procedure

The certificates and badges for Mercy Associates need to be carefully managed, as follows:

1. When any Mercy Associates group has members who need to be presented with a certificate and badge, they will forward the name(s) of the people concerned to their Network Facilitator. Usually the names will be forwarded by the group's liaison person or by the Sister of Mercy involved with that group. To allow time for printing certificates and postage, it is best to send the names in at least a fortnight before the commitment ceremony is being held, preferably three weeks.
2. The Network Facilitator will send the request (list of names) through to an administration officer at the Institute office who will arrange for the certificates to be printed with the names provided. Then these plus the required number of badges will be posted to the appropriate Community Leader for the region.
3. The Network Facilitator will keep a register of all people for whom certificates have been requested.
4. The Community Leader will sign the certificates. If she is attending the group's commitment ceremony, she will take the certificates and badges with her to present to each Mercy Associate. If she is unable to attend she will forward the certificates and badges to Sister attending on her behalf to take to the ceremony.

The following points are important to note:

- Certificates and badges are never issued individually to Mercy Associates from the Institute office – it is the role of Sisters (via Community Leaders) to present these at a commitment ceremony.
- Blank certificates and badges are never issued to any group or individual, i.e., it is not intended to have Mercy Associates groups holding 'spare' certificates and badges. Always, they are printed and issued only for specific names provided by groups via the Network Facilitators.
- If an individual Mercy Associate or anyone else connected with a Mercy Associates group makes contact with the Institute office to request a certificate and badge, the office will refer them to the Network Facilitator for their region. This includes situations such as badges or certificates that are lost or damaged and need to be replaced.
- If an error in the spelling of a name has occurred, the replacement certificate should be reprinted and sent to the Community Leader for her to sign. She will then arrange for it to be sent to the Mercy Associates group concerned. In order to keep the register of Mercy

Associates accurate, it is important the Network Facilitator is informed when a replacement certificate is issued.

- Always, certificates and badges are issued to the Community Leader. She will determine who she will forward them to if she is not attending the commitment ceremony.
- If any confusion or unusual situation arises, please contact the Executive Officer by phone or email to seek guidance on how to proceed.
- Copies of the blank certificates are held at the Institute office and it will be an administration officer there who prints the certificates. All badges are held at the Institute office.

Appendix I

Commitment / Renewal Ceremony Outline

The content of Commitment and Renewal ceremonies should be developed by each local group so that it is an expression of their faith and engagement with the charism of Mercy. The following outline should be used, as an expression of the unity among Mercy Associates groups across the Institute.

The ceremony is a liturgical event and should be held in a venue where a sense of the sacred can be achieved. In preparation of the venue, some physical resources should be set up, such as a table with the badges and certificates; chairs for those attending; booklets / leaflets of the ceremony; a low table (if possible), with a cross, bible, image of Catherine McAuley, candle(s), and other objects that hold symbolic importance to the group.

All Mercy Associates in the group should be invited to attend. The Community Leader for the region or her delegate should be invited, as well as any local Sisters of Mercy, especially those who have been associated with the group over the years. If the group has any persons undertaking preparation formation at the time, they should also be invited to attend. In the 'Who leads' section below, often 'A Mercy Associate' is listed – it is valuable to involve as many of the local group as possible in these elements of the liturgy.

The preparation of the prayers, readings, and other content of this liturgy will take time, and could be delegated to a small group of Mercy Associates. If there are Mercy Associates who will also be making a renewal on the same day as new Mercy Associates are making their initial commitment, the renewal section should follow the section where new Mercy Associates make their commitment as indicated below.

Order of Commitment / Renewal Ceremony:

Section of liturgy	Who leads
Welcome	Group's coordinator or the Community Leader / delegate
Opening song and prayer	Group for song; a Mercy Associate would lead the prayer
Reading from scripture	A Mercy Associate
Reading from the writings of Catherine McAuley	A Mercy Associate or Sister of Mercy
Gospel reading	A Mercy Associate
Short period of silent reflection	All present
Naming of those who are making their commitment	The Mercy Associate who has been guiding each candidate through the formation process should read their name if this is feasible; otherwise one Mercy Associate could read all names
Reading of the commitment statements; and reflection on individual commitments	The group making their commitment read aloud the 'common' section of the statement together. Once this is read, the leader of the ceremony invites each person

	to read (to themselves, in silence) the individual items they are committing to undertake as a Mercy Associate.
Acceptance of commitments	Community Leader / delegate Sister of Mercy
Prayer of blessing of badges	Community Leader / delegate, plus one Mercy Associate from local group
Presentation of badges, vision statement and certificates	Community Leader / delegate, plus one Mercy Associate from local group
Prayer of blessing for the new Mercy Associates	Print in service booklet so all present can read it aloud together
Renewals (<i>if part of this ceremony</i>)	Those who will renew their commitment are called forward by a Mercy Associate, and individually proceed to read out their renewal of commitment (<i>don't read aloud the personal items of commitment</i>).
Acceptance of renewals (<i>if part of this ceremony</i>)	Community Leader / delegate
Prayer of blessing for renewing Mercy Associates (<i>if part of this ceremony</i>)	Print in service booklet so all present can read it aloud together
Greeting of peace	Introduced by a Mercy Associate, shared by all
Closing prayer and hymn	Print in service booklet and read / sung by all

If possible, the commitment / renewal ceremony should be followed by a time of hospitality – morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, according to the time of day.

Appendix J

Annual Reflection

This resource may be of assistance to local groups of Mercy Associates as a means of reflecting on their involvement. It would also be a valuable resource for those discerning whether to proceed to make a renewal of their Mercy Associates commitment.

Name:

1. How have you shared your gifts and talents with your fellow Mercy Associates during this last year? How you have contributed to the effective functioning of your local group?
2. How has your call to be a Mercy Associate been lived out and how has it shaped you this last year? You might want to refer to your personal Commitment Statement or your most recent Renewal of Commitment as you consider this question.
3. As you reflect on your experience as an Associate, what continues to draw you? How have you received life from your involvement in Mercy Associates?
4. What has challenged you during this past year? How have you responded to these challenges?
5. What hopes do you have for your involvement as a Mercy Associate in the future? Are there any particular actions or service initiatives you'd like to focus on in the coming year?

Adapted from Mercy Association, Policy and Procedures Manual, South Central Community, pp. 24-25 (The Americas)

Appendix K

Template for Minutes of Mercy Associates Meetings

Location of group	
Date, time, venue of meeting	
Those in attendance	
Apologies	
Prayer / Reflection – state the topic/theme	
Matters arising from last meeting	
Matters discussed at this meeting	
Resolutions or decisions made	
Update on actions being undertaken by group	
Finance details	
Formation topic and presenter, perhaps one or two sentences about their input	
Matters identified to discuss at next meeting	
Date, time, location of next meeting	

Appendix L

Basic Terms and General Information

Calling	In a Christian context, to be called is to experience an inner sense that one should serve God in a particular way. Through baptism, all Christians are called to serve God, and each person discerns the nature of their calling, including professional and voluntary pursuits.
Chapter	The highest governing authority of the Institute is the Chapter, held every six years. It has legislative, executive and policy making power. In the period between Chapters, authority is vested in the Institute Leader. Four Institute Councillors assist the Institute Leader in exercising the role of leadership and together they make up the Institute Leadership Team (ILT). These five members of the ILT are elected by delegates at each Chapter. #
Community Leader	Within ISMAPNG, a Community Leader is a Sister who has pastoral oversight of one of the six community regions in Australia and Papua New Guinea. Their main role is to create bonds of unity among the members' and to help them grow in fidelity to the community's life and mission and also to contribute to the larger life and mission of the Institute. #
Institute Leadership Team (ILT)	Elected by Chapter delegates each six years, this group comprises the Institute Leader and four Councillors, who are all vowed Sisters of Mercy. For the period of time between Chapter meetings this group exercises governance over all Institute matters. #
ISMAPNG	The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) is a community of Catholic Religious Sisters in Australia, Papua New Guinea and further abroad. Founded in December 2011, ISMAPNG brought together the congregations of Adelaide, Ballarat East, Bathurst, Cairns, Goulburn, Grafton, Gunnedah, Melbourne, Perth, Rockhampton, Singleton, Townsville, West Perth, Wilcannia–Forbes, as well as the autonomous region of PNG together with a number of Sisters from the three congregations that have remained independent. These three Mercy congregations are: Brisbane, North Sydney and Parramatta. #
Network Facilitator	A person employed by ISMAPNG to work in a supportive way with Mercy Associates groups. They also liaise with Mercy workplaces to promote Mercy Associates and encourage the establishment of new Mercy Associates groups.
Sister of Mercy	A Sister of Mercy is a woman who responds to the call to know God's loving kindness and commits her life to sharing this with others through a life of service. Sisters of Mercy make life-long vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and apostolic service and in this case, become a member of a community of Catholic religious women called the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. There are three other congregations of Sisters of Mercy in Australia and many others around the world. #
# Adapted from the ISMAPNG website, http://institute.mercy.org.au/	

General Information

Website for ISMAPNG: institute.mercy.org.au

Contact information:

<i>Institute Centre</i> 33 Myrtle St, Stanmore, NSW, 2048 PO Box 284, Petersham, NSW, 2049 Phone: 0+61 2 9572 5400 Email: institute@ismapng.org.au	
<i>ISMAPNG Central A Community</i> Suite 2 & 2a 31-37 Townshend Street Phillip ACT 2606 Phone: +61 2 6283 5100	<i>ISMAPNG Central B Community</i> 20 Union Street Tighes Hill NSW 2297 Phone: +61 2 4964 6400
<i>ISMAPNG South A (SA) Community</i> 4 Victoria Street Mile End SA 5031 Phone: +61 8 8150 4900	<i>ISMAPNG South A (WA) Community</i> 60 John Street Northbridge WA 6003 Phone: +61 8 9328 6991
<i>ISMAPNG North QLD Community</i> 263 Agnus Street Rockhampton QLD 4700 +61 7 4927 1866	<i>ISMAPNG North PNG Community</i> McAuley House PO Box 265 Mt Hagen WHP 281 Papua New Guinea Phone: + 675 7040 4835
<i>ISMAPNG South B Community</i> 151 Victoria Street Ballarat East VIC 3350 Phone: +61 3 5331 7774	<i>ISMAPNG South C Community</i> 720 Heidelberg Road Alphington VIC 3078 Phone: +61 3 9499 1577 and: Mercy Hub 607-617 Nicholson St Carlton North VIC 3054 Phone: + 61 3 9389 8200

Mercy Associates Personnel		
Executive Officer (WA, PNG, Timor Leste)	Carmel Ross	mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au
Network Facilitator NSW	Christine Convery	mercyassociatesnsw@ismapng.org.au
Network Facilitator VIC	Anne Pate	mercyassociatesvic@ismapng.org.au
Network Facilitator QLD	Margaret Trevethan	mercyassociatesqld@ismapng.org.au