

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the study is presented, conclusions are drawn and supported on the basis of the findings, and implications for further research are proposed.

#### SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

##### Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study were to:

1. explore the characteristics of the Mercy Order as a religious community in order to develop a greater understanding of it as an organisation;
2. examine the process of change leading to a new governance structure in the Mercy Order with a view to contributing to a clearer understanding of the nature of change in a religious organisation;
3. draw conclusions on the introduction of change in a religious order -- conclusions which could be applied to the systematic study of change in similar types of religious organisations.

##### The Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the relationship between selected organisational characteristics and the change process which led to the adoption of a new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981.

##### Subproblems

In order to provide an answer to the major question posed in the statement of the problem, the following subproblems were stated:

1. What do the Sisters of Mercy perceive as the distinctive characteristics of their organisation?
2. What was the change process that led to the adoption of the new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981?
3. What was the relationship between the distinctive organisational characteristics and the process of change which led to the adoption of the new structure of governance?

#### Significance of the Study

The study was significant for the following reasons:

1. In the extensive literature on different kinds of organisations, little has been written about the way in which communities of religious function as organisations. This study makes a contribution to this area by selecting organisational characteristics which identify these communities as a special type of human service organisation.
2. A great amount of information has been collected about the kinds of change which have taken place in communities of religious. This study demonstrates how information about a religious community can be used to understand change processes in such an organisation.
3. In the literature on organisations, models of change reflect the diversity of organisations found in modern society. The process of change described and analysed in this study provided insights into the way in which a religious community, as an organisation, dealt with change.
4. The description and analysis of the process of change undertaken in this study may benefit other communities of religious who are searching for a new structure of governance as part of their revised Constitutions.

5. The approach taken in this study can contribute to research and also to practice for the change process in communities of religious. The study is significant for research in that it provides a different conceptual framework for analysing the process of change. A major justification for this study is the contribution which theory may make in informing practice. Members of religious communities, other than the Sisters of Mercy, who are seeking a way to approach the introduction of a new structure of governance may find useful guidelines in this study.

#### Research Plan for the Study

The sequence of activities involved in carrying out this study constituted the research plan. Following the statement of the general research problem, the researcher described the context of the study which emphasised the particular nature of the Mercy community and established a frame of reference for the research problem. As a result of an analysis of the historical antecedents of the Mercy Order, and after a review of the relevant literature, the researcher formulated a conceptual framework to help guide the research. The researcher, then, refined the research problem and developed the subproblems. The next activity in the sequence was selection of research appropriate for investigation of the research problem and choice of the methods by which data were collected and treated. On the basis of findings from the data, conclusions about the relationship between the organisational characteristics and the process of change were drawn. Finally, areas for further research were indicated.

### Research Methodology

A case study approach was used in this research to investigate the relationship between selected organisational characteristics and the change process which led to the adoption of a new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981. Boundaries to the study were clearly defined. The period of time between 1957 and 1981 was chosen because the process of change to be analysed occurred during this time. The case was limited to particular kinds of data -- experiences and perceptions of the change process described by members of the religious community, including the researcher as participant-observer, and written records of matters relating to the changes of structure found in archives of the Mercy Order.

### Collection and Treatment of Data

To gain an understanding of the complex nature of the religious organisation, data were collected from several sources, through interviews with delegates at the first formal meeting of the newly-constituted Mercy Institute, through questionnaires distributed to a random sample of Sisters in each Mercy group, through analysis of archival material, and from the experience and insights of the researcher, herself a Sister of Mercy and participant observer. The research techniques were used as complementary to each other, in the research strategy known as "triangulation". To order the collection of data, the researcher investigated the research problem through the three subproblems, and organised the findings in the sequence in which those subproblems were treated. A conceptual framework was formulated to assist in analysing the process of change. The final stage in the treatment of data was the presentation of conclusions about the process of change leading to the new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, conclusions were drawn about each of the four organisational characteristics (reported in Chapter 5) and about the change process (reported in Chapter 6). These were synthesised to generate conclusions about the relationship between the four organisational characteristics and the change process.

Organisational Characteristics

Four characteristics were selected as crucial to the understanding of the Mercy Order as an organisation. Conclusions about these four characteristics are listed as follows:

Focus on mission.

*Mercy mission is corporate in nature in that all Sisters take a vow to serve the poor, the sick, and the ignorant. The expression of this mission takes the form of a variety of group and individual ministries.*

*The importance of autonomy in mission, for individuals and for Mercy groups, is evidenced by the vow of service in the Mercy Constitutions and the freedom of individual Sisters and local communities to engage in a range of ministries.*

*Sisters justify increasing diversification of ministries within the Mercy mission by emphasising the importance of the vow of service in responding to expressed needs.*

*The involvement of all Sisters in the process of examining and re-interpreting the vow of service leads to a clearer expression and a shared understanding of Mercy mission. The focus on service to people in real poverty provides firm direction for Mercy mission.*

*To respond more efficiently to expressed needs, Sisters look for increasing collaboration and planning within the Mercy Order and with people in the Church and in the wider society.*

Commitment of members.

*Initial commitment is marked by voluntary taking of the vows, and continuing commitment is demonstrated by the living of the vows as redefined and re-interpreted by each Sister.*

*Organisational commitment of the Sisters is not homogeneous and unidimensional, but a multi-dimensional phenomenon which accommodates individual differences.*

*Commitment of Sisters is strengthened as a result of the enlightenment they receive from spiritual and professional renewal, from meeting other Sisters, and from personal support in their local communities.*

*Group and individual commitment is enhanced by the dedication and commitment of exceptional and influential women in the Mercy Order.*

*The threat to survival of the Mercy Order, represented by the decreasing number of active members, leads to an increasing commitment to living the vows.*

### Servant leadership.

*Sisters perceive servant leadership as the appropriate form of leadership for the Mercy Order. Servant leadership means that the servant leader ensures that other people's highest priority needs are being met.*

*The change, from an autocratic leadership style and a closed succession pattern to servant leadership and a more open succession pattern, was painful for both leaders and followers.*

*The exercise of servant leadership is appropriate to implementing the directives of the Second Vatican Council that Sisters participate more fully in group decision-making and take more responsibility for their own decision-making.*

*Leadership at the national level, whether exercised by the National President, the National Executive, or the Plenary Council, takes the form of servant leadership.*

### Ethos of the Mercy community.

*The concept of "ethos" is interpreted by Sisters of Mercy as "Mercyness" or "the Mercy way", and is crucial to understanding the Mercy Order as an organisation.*

*The spirit of Catherine McAuley still pervades the Mercy Order through the importance of mission, through the nature of the commitment of members, and through the servant quality of its leaders.*

*The Constitutions and the organisation saga are the means by which the Mercy ethos is preserved, articulated, and transmitted.*

*Autonomy of individuals and Mercy groups, in choice of ministry and living of religious life, is an important value in the Mercy ethos.*

*Flexibility in response to a variety of expressed needs, whether from within the Mercy Order, from the Roman Catholic Church, or from society, continues to be an important element in Mercy ethos.*

### The Process of Change

*The role of the Church in the process of change leading to the adoption of the new structure of governance was to initiate the process of change, to maintain the movement towards a new unification of the Mercy community in Australia, and to legitimate the structures of unification (the Mercy Conference, Mercy Constitutions, and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy), developed by the Sisters.*

*In the absence of a formal plan towards unification, there was a consistent approach in that collaborative ventures among the Sisters were used throughout the process of change.*

*Adoption of the new structure of governance was facilitated by positive experiences associated with previous unifying structures and accommodation in the new structure of governance for negative experiences.*

*Adoption of the new structure of governance was enhanced by allowing Sisters sufficient time to become ready to make decisions.*

*During the process of change, re-examination of mission, commitment, nature of leadership, and "Mercyness", led to an awareness of the commonality of certain aspects of Mercy life and work, formalised in the common Constitutions.*

*Different people were influential at different stages in the process of change leading to the adoption of the new structure of governance:*

- (i) in the early stages, Church authorities in Rome, certain clerics, and Major Superiors, were influential in the choice of Union (1954) and Federation (1957) structures;*
- (ii) in the intermediate stage, continuing dialogue between Mercy Major Superiors led to the formation of the Conference of Sisters of Mercy (1966), and to the organisation of the National Assembly (1977) while the activities of the Executive Director of the Mercy Conference and Working Party on Governance produced drafts leading to the final document,*
- (iii) in the final stages, in Rome, the two Mercy Sisters and the two Church lawyers presented the case for the Australian Sisters of Mercy. Later, in Australia, the vote of all Sisters was required before authorisation by Church authorities in Rome of the establishment of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia.*

The Relationship Between the Organisational  
Characteristics and the Process of Change

Conclusions are now presented about the relationship between the four organisational characteristics and the process of change which led to the new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981.

During the process of change, the Sisters of Mercy continued to uphold the value of autonomy for their religious community. Although Church authorities encouraged the Sisters to commit themselves to working towards a new unifying form of governance, they respected the Sisters' right to choose their own way of doing this.

*The limited role of the Church in directing the process of change and determining the form of the new structure of governance is consistent with the importance of autonomy to the Sisters and with the interpretation of commitment which developed during the process of change.*

As the members of the Mercy Order became increasingly committed to the concept of servant leadership and to the demands of mission, formal leaders sought ways to serve both the Sisters and the mission through the development of a new structure of governance.

*The commitment to the ideals of servant leadership and mission helped maintain continued efforts of formal leaders to achieve a new form of governance acceptable to the Sisters and supportive of mission.*

At different times during the history of the Mercy Order, exceptional women had an influence on the way in which the religious community developed. During the process of change, exceptional Sisters of Mercy were influential at different stages of the development of the new structure of governance.

*The importance of a few influential Sisters in the development of the new structure of governance is consistent with the Mercy tradition of exceptional women making an important contribution to the development of the Mercy Order.*



During the process of change leading to the adoption of the new structure of governance, the Sisters of Mercy were evaluating Mercy mission and ministries. Their experiences in collaboration during the study of mission helped them to view the study of governance as less threatening.

*The adoption of the new structure of governance was facilitated by the concurrent development of the shared understanding of a corporate mission.*

During the process of change, and as a result of a reinterpretation of the vow of obedience, Sisters were able to be more involved in decision-making. Moreover, the exercise of servant leadership was exemplified by allowing Sisters to make their own decisions when they were ready.

*Concern for the readiness of Sisters to make decisions about the adoption of the new structure of governance is consistent with exercise of servant leadership and the reinterpretation of the vow of obedience.*

For acceptance of the new structure of governance, a change in crucial values related to the four organisational characteristics was necessary to make possible the collaborative approach used during the change process.

*The increasing collaboration between formal leaders and Sisters, and between members of different Mercy communities, resulting from the reinterpretation of the vows, made Sisters more aware of commonalities in mission, commitment, the nature of leadership, and their "Mercyness".*

Sisters valued their freedom to choose ministries in response to a multiplicity of expressed needs. They made this a prime consideration when they were developing a new structure of governance.

*Diversity in ministry, within a corporate mission, was valued so highly by the Sisters that any diminution in autonomy would generate resistance to acceptance of a new structure of governance.*

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings and conclusions from this study and the methodology used have a number of implications for the analysis of change in a religious community. They also indicate areas for further research.

### Implications for Practice

Change in structure of governance does not occur very often in communities of religious in the Roman Catholic Church. This study may encourage other religious communities to document such a change in their own group, as an attempt to understand the process of change must include as complete as possible a description of the situation confronting those in the change venture.

In Australia, there is little primary data on religious organisations preserved and analysed. This study would serve to demonstrate the value of collecting the perceptions of members of a religious community during a period of change.

In Australia, communities of religious have not often been examined as organisations; this study could help explain, at least partially, how analysis of one community of religious could make a contribution to the understanding of other communities of religious.

The description and analysis of the process of change undertaken in this study may benefit other communities who are searching for a new structure of governance as part of their revised Constitutions. The findings in the present research highlighted the need for an extended period of time during which the members of the religious community might work towards a structure of governance acceptable to them.

Some time in the future, the religious community which is the subject of this study may wish to engage in change leading to another type of innovation for the total group. Access to the present study may give members of the Mercy Order information on strengths and weaknesses of the way in which they went about the process of change leading to the adoption of the new structure of governance.

### Implications for Further Research

The findings and conclusions from this study complement the findings and conclusions of other research related to change in religious communities. The case study approach taken in this research provides another perspective into the process of change.

Many of the propositions relating to the nature of the religious organisation, as a special type of human service organisation, and the characteristics identified as crucial in understanding the process of change in the religious community, can be regarded as a series of working hypotheses which can be used as a focus for further research.

The study is significant for research in that it provides a new conceptual framework for analysing the process of change. Further research using this framework could be carried out under similar conditions to discover if the same conclusions about change would be drawn in other religious communities of a similar type.

Finally, the case study itself precludes generalising to other religious communities, although the case study approach may well be used by other religious communities.

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APPENDIX A

PERSONAL LETTER TO THE RESEARCHER

FROM FR. MARK SAÏD



PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITA SAN TOMMASO  
LARGO ANGELICUM, 1 - TEL. 07.93.400-07.90.818-089.181  
00184 ROMA

August 11, 1980  
6 Suffara Road  
Rabat, Malta.

Rev. Sr. Valda Ward R.S.M.  
Conference of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia,  
Sisters of Mercy Generalate,  
151 Victoria Street,  
Ballarat East, VICTORIA 3350,  
AUSTRALIA.

Dear Sister Ward,  
I should have written this letter at least four months ago to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated March 13

.....  
It was a great joy to hear that you could bring to the Australian Sisters a very positive response to your request as a result of your trip to Rome. I am pretty sure you are following the right path and that the inspiration is coming from the Lord Himself. So, you have all my encouragement and also the help of my poor prayers. It will be a great day for the Family of the Mercy Sisters of Australia when the Federation of all the Communities will be firmly established. Spare no effort to attain that end and you will have the blessing of the Church and of the Lord.

You will be glad to know that the revision of the "draft" of the general law of the Church concerning consecrated life is now ready. In fact, the whole of the revised "Code of Canon Law" is now ready. It may be that at this moment the text is in the hands of the Cardinal Members of the Pontifical Commission for their comments and proposals. The secretary of the Commission, Bishop Castillo Lara, told me at the end of May that the Cardinals will have about four or five months to hand in their comments. Then I suppose that a special group will be formed to examine, accept or reject these proposals and the revised text will go to the Holy Father's desk. It is difficult to foretell when this will take place, but the Secretary said that, if things proceed normally, the text should be in the Pope's hands by September or October 1981. Let's hope so!

.....  
I would like to beg you to remember me to the two good priests who were with us during our meeting at the Angelicum and to the Sister who came with you. I believe she was the President of the other group of Mercy Sisters. All the best to all of you and may God bless you. Thank you very much for your prayers. I certainly need them.

Yours Very Sincerely in Christ

J. Mark, *and OP*

*P.S. I will be back in Rome at the beginning of October*

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE ACT OF PROFESSION  
(SISTERS OF MERCY)



## Act of Profession

In the name of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and under the protection of His Immaculate Mother Mary, ever Virgin, I, Valda Mary Ward, called in Religion, Sister Mary Gabriel, do vow and promise to God, Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and the Service of the Poor, Sick, and Ignorant, and to persevere until death, in this Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy, according to its approved Constitutions, under the authority of our Mother General, called in Religion, Mother Mary Carmel, and of her successors, and in the hands of the said Mother General, and in presence of you, Reverend Father in God, Vincent Fennelly, deputed representative of His Lordship, Most Reverend James O'Collins, Bishop of Ballarat on this the third day of February, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven in the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy, Ballarat East.

Valda Mary Ward.

Called in Religion: Sister Mary Gabriel

Mother Mary Carmel Nean, Mother General.

Mother Mary Adina Parsons, Vicar General.

Vincent Fennelly

As you know, I am interested in understanding something of the way in which change has taken place in the Mercy community since the establishment of Union and Federation. I am particularly interested in the way in which the new structure of governance has evolved, and would like to hear your views on some aspects of this.

- \* \* In the last few years, some Sisters have become very involved in the development of the new structure of governance. To what extent have you been involved personally?
- \* \* How did your group go about the study of the draft of the new structure of governance?
- \* \* One of the terms often heard at the meetings prior to the adoption of the new structure of governance was the word "autonomy". Sisters of both Union and Federation were often heard to declare: "We want to be unified, but we don't want to lose our autonomy!" Was this a concern for your group?
- \* \* What prevented earlier establishment of a unified structure of governance?
- \* \* How do you explain the fact that movement towards adoption of the new structure accelerated after the national meeting at Gunnedah?
- \* \* Were you surprised at the speed with which the draft structure of governance passed through the Sacred Congregation in Rome?

- \* \* What influence did you see the canon lawyers as having on the search for a new structure of governance?
- \* \* Many Australian Bishops in the dioceses in which Sisters of Mercy are working sent to Rome a letter of support for the step that the Sisters were taking in adopting a new structure of governance. What impression did that make on the Sisters in your group?
- \* \* At this stage, in the development of your own group, what do you see as the emphasis in mission and in ministry?
- \* \* What change in emphasis in mission in your group do you see with the gradual development of the Institute?
- \* \* In your group, has there been much sharing of your personnel and resources with other Mercy groups?
- \* \* In your time as a Sister of Mercy, what have been your experiences of the leadership within your own group?
- \* \* In your memory of your group, what have been the most noteworthy changes in Religious living and working?

As you know, I am interested in understanding something of the way in which change has taken place among Sisters of Mercy in Australia, particularly since the establishment of the Union and the Federation, and would like to hear some of your ideas on this.

1. During your time as a Sister of Mercy, what major changes in religious living have you experienced within your group?

- 
2. What further changes in religious living in your group would you hope to see in the future?

3. In the 1950's, some Australian Mercy groups decided to form a Union and others a Federation. How do you explain the fact that all groups did not choose the same structure of governance at that time?

4. One decision taken recently by all Mercy groups in Australia was the acceptance of a new structure of governance. What steps led to the formal acceptance of this structure by members of your group?

5. "Christ's lesson of servant leadership (John 13:15) teaches us to look for ways of exercising authority and practising obedience, that liberates and strengthen each sister, and enable the total body to work more effectively for the kingdom."

(Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia, 1981, p.24)

To what extent has this been your personal experience of leadership in your group?



6. What kind of influence do you expect the national structure of governance will have on the exercise of leadership in your own group?

7. To someone who knows nothing about the Sisters of Mercy how would you explain the mission of your Mercy group?

8. In the future what impact do you expect the new structure will have on the mission (a) of your own Mercy group, and (b) of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy?

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO DELEGATES ATTENDING NATIONAL  
MERCY CHAPTER, NOVEMBER 1981

Centre for Administrative Studies  
University of New England  
ARMIDALE NSW 2351

23 November 1981

Dear

Since I came out of office in our Congregation earlier this year, I have been here at the University working on a PhD thesis. I have chosen to make a study of the process of change leading to the adoption of the new structure of governance for the Mercy Order in Australia.

During the National Chapter I would be grateful if you would be prepared to spend an hour with me at some time convenient to you. I would like to discuss with you your perceptions of the way in which our seventeen groups decided to move into a new form of governance.

I hope that each delegate may be prepared to give me her own personal thoughts concerning the reasons for the change from Federation or Union to Institute. This would give me invaluable information from the group of Sisters who are involved in initial policy-making in the Institute.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting and hope that you may be able to spend some time with me.

Every good wish.

Yours sincerely



SISTER VALDA WARD RSM

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO MAJOR SUPERIORS OF THE 17  
MERCY GROUPS, FEBRUARY 1982

St. Albert's College,  
University of New England,  
ARMIDALE. N.S.W. 2351

22nd February, 1982.

Dear

I would like to thank you and the Sisters from your Mercy group for so generously spending time with me during the National Chapter in December. There is a wealth of information about the Australian Sisters of Mercy in the material that has been typed from the interview tapes.

I would now be grateful if you would help me in two further matters.

- (1) I wish to administer an open-ended questionnaire to ten Sisters from each of the seventeen Mercy groups. (You will recognize the questions as covering substantially the same matters as we discussed in the interview.) If you are happy for your group to be involved, would you be kind enough to make a random selection of ten Sisters who were not present at the National Chapter? For each Sister I am including a letter of explanation, eight question sheets, and a stamped, addressed envelope for return of the material. I have numbered question sheets and envelopes as I need to know from which Mercy group the information has come.
- (2) For the work I am doing on leadership there is certain vital information about leaders in our Mercy groups which, at present, is not readily available. I hope you may be able to supply the relevant information for your group. For reasons which will be obvious to you since the interview I begin with the period just prior to the establishment of the Union and the Federation and end at the beginning of March this year.

So far, my work seems to be going well. If you can help me through this last stage of information-gathering, I hope to be able to begin writing quite soon.

Please keep me in your prayers. I pray very specially for people like yourself who have accepted the challenge of a very important task for the Church.

Every good wish.

Affectionately,

*Valda.*

SISTER VALDA WARD, R.S.M.

The information requested below concerns the Major Superior and Councillors of each General/Provincial for the period January 1, 1950, to March 1, 1982.

1. Name of Congregation/Province
2. Name of Sister
3. Place of birth
4. Title (e.g. Superior General, Provincial, Councillor)

At time of election:

5. Age
6. Years since first profession
7. Apostolic work
8. Leadership position (e.g. principal of school,  
matron of hospital,  
local superior)

While in office:

9. Date of appointment
10. Length of appointment
11. Period of reappointment

After coming out of office

12. Apostolic work
13. Leadership position
14. Date of death



APPENDIX G

LETTER ACCOMPANYING QUESTIONNAIRE TO REPRESENTATIVE  
SAMPLE OF SISTERS OF MERCY, FEBRUARY 1982

St. Albert's College,  
University of New England,  
ARMIDALE. N.S.W. 2351.

22nd February, 1982.

Dear Sister,

At present I am working on a doctoral thesis in the Centre for Administrative Studies at the University of New England. I have chosen to make a study of the process of change leading to the adoption of the new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy, Australia.

During the National Chapter in Sydney, each of the delegates very generously gave up an hour of her spare time to discuss with me her perceptions of the way in which the seventeen groups decided to move into a new form of governance. This gave me invaluable information from those Sisters who were closely involved in initial policy-making in the Institute.

I now hope that some of the Sisters not present at the Chapter will be prepared to give me their opinions on the same matter. I would be most grateful if you would be one of those Sisters.

I am enclosing eight questions, each on a separate sheet of paper. Please write your comments on the front and back of the sheet on which the question is printed. If you wish to write more than will fit in that space, please staple additional paper to the sheet on which the question is printed. At your earliest convenience, please return all sheets (including any unanswered) in the enclosed envelope.

Please understand that your comments to me will remain completely confidential. Should you wish to sign your name, however, it would give me the chance to write to you and express my gratitude for your cooperation. When the study is complete, I shall send a report to each Mercy group.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Every good wish.

Sincerely,



SISTER VALDA WARD, R.S.M.

APPENDIX H

LETTER TO MAJOR SUPERIORS, APRIL 1982

St. Albert's College,  
University of New England,  
ARMIDALE. N.S.W. 2351.

April 26, 1982

Dear

Thank you for distributing the questionnaires to the Sisters of your Congregation. By now most Sisters have returned their comments to me, and for this I am very grateful.

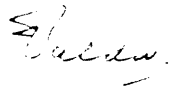
The following questionnaires

Nos. , , ,

have, however, not yet been returned. As I hope to have a sample of ten Sisters from each group, would you be kind enough to enquire if your Sisters are able to complete and return the outstanding questionnaires?

Thank you for your generous help in this project.

Yours sincerely,



(Sister Valda Ward)

APPENDIX I

LETTER TO THE SACRED CONGREGATION REQUESTING PERMISSION  
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF  
SISTERS OF MERCY OF AUSTRALIA

Villa Rosa,  
Via delle Terme Sacciane, 5,  
Aventino. ROMA.

His Eminence Eduardo Cardinal Pironio,  
Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes,  
Piazza Pio XII, 3,  
00193 ROMA.

My Lord Cardinal,

From 21st to 28th January, 1960, we have been engaged in discussions with our canonical advisers and representatives of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes with a view to moving from the present canonical provisions of Federation and Union to the establishment of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia. We were greatly encouraged during these meetings and particularly by the insights shared by His Excellency, Archbishop Mayer, C.S.B.

As a result of our discussions we now respectfully request the following:

(1) approval by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes of the Constitution on Governance and the By-Laws (Documents A and B respectively) as agreed on 28th January, 1960, at a meeting of the following:

Reverend Father Elio Gambari, S.M.A.,  
Sister Mary Linscott, S.M.D.,  
Sister Valda Ward, R.S.M.,  
Sister Dorothy Campion, R.S.M.,  
Reverend Doctor T.J. Connolly,  
Reverend Father James Esler, S.M. ;

(2) permission to proceed to formal ratification of Documents A and B by the Sisters of Mercy belonging to the Union and the Federation, either by way of Chapter (during 1960) or in some other acceptable way (where Chapters are not due in 1960);

(3) permission to proceed to the first National Chapter of

the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia as provided for in Documents A and B ;

(4) provision for submission of all the Acts of Chapters of the Congregations (or evidence of formal ratification obtained in other ways: cf. 2 above) and the Acts of the National Chapter of the Institute to the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes for approval :

(5) subject to the above, formal establishment of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes :

(6) the establishment by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes of the provinces of the Union as Congregations of pontifical right (thus constituting the Institute as made up of seventeen Congregations of pontifical right).

We wish to express deep gratitude to the members of the Sacred Congregation for their gracious welcome and for their comments and suggestions which have helped us not only to clarify our vision but also to come within reach of realizing it.

Wishing you every blessing,

We remain,

Yours respectfully,

*Sr. Valda Ward, R.S.M. 26th January, 1980.*

Sr. Valda Ward, R.S.M.

President of the Conference of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia,

President of the Federation of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia.

*Sr. Dorothy Campion, R.S.M. 29th January, 1980.*

Sr. Dorothy Campion, R.S.M.

Superior General of the Australian Union of Sisters  
of Mercy .

APPENDIX J

LETTER FROM THE SACRED CONGREGATION OUTLINING STEPS  
TO BE TAKEN FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSTITUTE  
OF SISTERS OF MERCY OF AUSTRALIA





SACRA CONGREGAZIONE  
PER I RELIGIOSI  
E GLI ISTITUTI SECOLARI

January 31, 1980

Prot. n. B. 180-1/80

Dear Sisters,

This Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes has received your letter of January 28 in which, on behalf of the Sisters, you propose steps that will move from the present canonical provisions of Federation and Union to the establishment of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia.

We have studied with interest the Constitution and By-laws on Governance which you presented. The opportunity to discuss these, and indeed the whole evolution of the Institute, with you and with your canonical advisers was much appreciated and it is in the light of these conversations, as well as of the texts themselves, that we make the following dispositions:

1. - This Sacred Congregation views favourably the project submitted and considers Documents A and B a good basis on which to ask for the formal ratification of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia by the Sisters at present belonging to the Federation and the Union.
2. - The Superiors of the Federation and the Union are herewith authorized to use Documents A and B to ascertain the option of the Sisters either a) by way of a Chapter, where a Chapter is due during 1980 or where a special chapter is called for the purpose:  
or b) in some other acceptable way, such as a referendum, where a Chapter is not due during 1980 and it is not feasible to call a special Chapter.
3. - The results of the Chapters and of the other formal expressions of opinion should be sent to this Sacred Congregation by the good offices of the existing Conference as soon as possible.
4. - Should the project be ratified by the Sisters (and for this a two-thirds majority at least would be necessary, whatever method is used to ascertain the option), the materials in 3 should be accompanied by the request for:
  - a) the formal erection of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes; the establishment by the Sacred Congregation of the Provinces of the Union as Congregations of Pontifical Right; and the dissolution, as a result of these steps, of the existing Federation and Union which would then together constitute the new Institute;

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Sister Valda Ward F.S.M.  
Sister Dorothy Campion R.S.M.  
Conference of Sisters of Mercy of Australia  
Key Street  
Campbell A.C.T.

Australia

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- b) the approval by the Sacred Congregation of the Constitution on Governance and of the By-laws;
- c) the permission to proceed to the first National Chapter of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia as provided for in Documents A and B.

This Sacred Congregation will willingly meet such requests as promptly as possible and is available to help with any questions which may arise.

With every good wish to you and to the Sisters, and with the prayer that the Lord will bless the endeavour that you are undertaking in his service, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Augustine Hayes

Scu.

Basil Steiner, ofms.  
Undersecretary.

APPENDIX K

PRO FORMA OF AUTHENTICATION OF CHAPTER

DOCUMENT OF AUTHENTICATION OF CHAPTER

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being the Superior General of the \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation, being a member of the Australian Federation of the Sisters of Mercy, hereby declare that, in pursuance of the letter of 31 January 1980 of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (Prot.n.B.180-1/80), our Congregation held a General Chapter on \_\_\_\_\_ 1980.

Furthermore, I declare that at the Chapter the Sisters present were asked to consider both the following propositions:

1. That the members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation of the Australian Federation of Sisters of Mercy accept the Constitution on Governance and the By-Laws as amended and ratified at the Special National Meeting on Conference Structures, in Ryde, New South Wales, (26-31 October 1979) and further amended following presentation to the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes in January 1980.
2. That the members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation of the Australian Federation of Sisters of Mercy formally approve the establishment of the "Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia" to unite the existing Provinces of the Australian Union of Sisters of Mercy and the existing Congregations of the Australian Federation of Sisters of Mercy in accordance with the aforesaid amended Constitution on Governance.

Finally, I declare the results of the Chapter to be as follows:

Proposition 1: approved by

Proposition 2: approved by

In conclusion, I declare that each proposition has the approval of at least a two-third majority of the General Chapter of our Congregation.

DATED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 198

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SUPERIOR GENERAL

Seal

APPENDIX L  
PRO FORMA OF AUTHENTICATION OF CHAPTER

DOCUMENT OF AUTHENTICATION OF CHAPTER OR  
OTHER FORMAL CONSULTATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being the Superior General of the Australian Union of the Sisters of Mercy, hereby declare that, in pursuance of the letter of 31 January 1980, of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (Prot.n.B.180-1/80), Provincial Chapters were held as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ 1980  
 \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ 1980  
 \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ 1980  
 \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ 1980

Furthermore, I declare that when a Provincial Chapter was not due or where it was not feasible to call a special Chapter, a Formal Consultation was made of all the Sisters of the following Provinces:

\_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ 1980  
 \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ 1980  
 \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ 1980  
 \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ 1980

Furthermore, I declare that at each such Chapter or in each such Formal Consultation, the Sisters were asked to consider both the following propositions, namely

1. That the members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Province of the Australian Union of Sisters of Mercy accept the Constitution on Governance and the By-Laws as amended and ratified at the Special National Meeting on Conference Structures, in Ryde, New South Wales, (26-31 October 1979) and further amended following presentation to the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes in January 1980.
2. That the members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Province of the Australian Union of Sisters of Mercy formally approve the establishment of the "Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia" to unite the existing Provinces of the Australian Union of Sisters of Mercy and the existing Congregations of the Australian Federation of Sisters of Mercy in accordance with the aforesaid amended Constitution on Governance.

Finally, I declare the results of the Chapters and other Formal Consultation on the above propositions to be as follows:

Proposition 1: approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
 Proposition 2: approved by \_\_\_\_\_

In conclusion, I declare that each proposition has the approval of at least a two-third majority of the Sisters of each Province of the Australian Union of the Sisters of Mercy.

DATED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 1980

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX M

DOCUMENT OF DISSOLUTION OF THE  
UNION AND FEDERATION

DISSOLUTION

of

THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS OF MERCY

and

THE AUSTRALIAN UNION OF THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

In the presence of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Luigi Barbarito, D.D., D.C.L. Apostolic Pro-Nuncio in Australia and in the presence of the duly convoked National Chapter of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia, the members of the Council of the Australian Federation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy and the General Council of the Australian Union of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy express their gratitude to God for the achievements of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia in recent decades.

We, the undersigned, rejoice in the establishment of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and accept and acknowledge the dissolution of both the Australian Federation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy and the Australian Union of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. We pledge our allegiance to and support of the newly established Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia as constituted.

We congratulate ..... *Bertha Campbell RSM* ..... the newly elected President and the other members of the National Executive Council. We promise, on behalf of all our Sisters, prayerful and loyal support in all their undertakings and herewith append our signatures as proof thereof.

FEDERATION COUNCIL

GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE UNION

<i>Doris M. Donaldson RSM</i>	<i>Carol Hughes RSM</i>	<i>Bertha Campbell RSM</i>
<i>Kath. Davis RSM</i>	<i>Margaret Langford RSM</i>	<i>Mary Harrington RSM</i>
<i>Theresa Brown RSM</i>	<i>Patricia M. Linn RSM</i>	<i>Patricia E. Powell RSM</i>
<i>Francesca Wood RSM</i>	<i>S. M. Tim. Conall</i>	
<i>Patricia Brown RSM</i>	<i>.....</i>	
<i>Patricia Ayles RSM</i>	<i>Lillian Mary Curran</i>	
<i>Joan Lynch RSM</i>	<i>Anne W. Day RSM</i>	
<i>Ma. O'Malley RSM</i>	<i>Bertha Mott RSM</i>	
<i>Margaret Ross RSM</i>	<i>.....</i>	
<i>Mary Clare Forster RSM</i>		

Date: *15<sup>th</sup> December 1981*

Place: *St. Paul's Seminary Kensington Sydney*

Signature of Apostolic Pro-Nuncio *.....*