

MERCY PARTNERS



COMPASSION

JUSTICE

RESPECT

HOPE



WHAT IS MERCY PARTNERS?

Mercy Partners is a Catholic Church entity which was set up with Vatican approval by the four **Mercy Congregations** in Queensland in November 2008 to assume sponsorship responsibility for their institutional ministries.

SINCE THEN, MERCY PARTNERS has also assumed sponsorship responsibility for ministries founded by the Presentation Sisters in Queensland and the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The ministries consist of schools, hospitals, aged care and community services facilities. Mercy Partners will ensure these ministries – which it sponsors in the name of the Catholic Church – will still be considered ministries of the Church.



HOW IS MERCY PARTNERS STRUCTURED?

Mercy Partners is a Public Juridic Person, i.e. it has a legal identity within the Church in accordance with Church (canon) Law. It is also incorporated in civil law under the Roman Catholic Church (Incorporation of Church Entities) Act 1994 Qld. Thus Mercy Partners has legal status, both in civil law and Church law, in accordance with its Statutes and Constitution. There is provision in the Statutes and Constitution of Mercy Partners for Religious Congregations to transfer canonical responsibility for their ministries to Mercy Partners. Mercy Partners is governed by a council which is supported by three council committees and a small executive and administrative staff. The office of the council is based at Flower Street, Northgate. Mercy Partners is a separate entity from the Religious Congregations, both in Church law and in civil law. However, the Religious Congregations have assumed the position of Stewards of Mercy Partners with certain responsibilities under the Statutes and Constitution. As Stewards, they nominate the majority of Councillors, approve any changes to Mercy Partners Constitution and approve the annual report to Rome. When additional Religious Congregations join Mercy Partners they may apply to become Stewards.

WHICH MINISTRIES HAVE TRANSFERRED TO MERCY PARTNERS?

The Sisters of Mercy Townsville Congregation transferred Mater Health Services North Queensland, Mercy Community Services North Queensland and St Patrick's College, Townsville in 2011. The Sisters of Mercy Rockhampton Congregation transferred Mercy Health and Aged Care Central Queensland late in 2011. The Sisters of Mercy Brisbane Congregation transferred Mater Misericordiae Limited and All Hallows' School in March 2013 and Mercy Community Services South East Queensland in April 2018. The Presentation Sisters of Queensland transferred St Rita's College (Clayfield) in May 2014 and St Ursula's College (Yeppoon) in June 2014 and the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception transferred Mount Alvernia College (Kedron) in 2017. In July 2020, Mercy Partners health ministries merged to create one ministry, Mater Misericordiae Limited. These nine incorporated ministries comprise separate education, health, aged care and community services facilities in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Yeppoon, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville. .

WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MERCY PARTNERS TO ITS MINISTRIES?

The primary responsibility of Mercy Partners is to ensure each of its ministries acts in accordance with its mission as a Church sponsored ministry. To this end, Mercy Partners has certain powers reserved to it, and these are spelled out in the Constitution of each ministry. These reserve powers ensure that the ministry continues to operate and be recognised as a ministry of the Catholic Church. Mercy Partners will itself be increasingly recognised over time as an entity that is responsible for significant ministries of the Church in Australia, providing an advocacy role in wider Church and civil forums.

HOW CAN CONGREGATIONS TRANSFER THEIR MINISTRIES?

A Religious Congregation wishing to transfer ministries to Mercy Partners makes an application to Mercy Partners Council. The final decision rests with the Council of Mercy Partners, but, in general, if another Congregation or Church body applies to have one or more of its incorporated ministries transferred, the ministry must meet the required criteria and the necessary preparatory steps must be undertaken. Mercy Partners provides formation to ministry leaders, and Congregations in the process of transferring ministries are encouraged to participate in formation events.

HOW DO MINISTRIES TRANSFER TO MERCY PARTNERS?

It is the decision of a Religious Congregation to transfer an incorporated ministry to Mercy Partners. Before a transfer takes place, each ministry needs to be incorporated in civil law. Ministries need to meet certain pre-determined criteria before transfer. The process that has been developed involves much consultation between the Congregation and the ministry, between the Congregation and Mercy Partners, and between Mercy Partners and the ministry. There is a familiarisation process to ensure that all involved in a particular ministry understand the changes before the transfer takes place.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES TRANSFER TO MERCY PARTNERS MEAN TO A MINISTRY?

The major change is at the governance level where, instead of the ministry being ultimately responsible to its sponsoring Congregation, it will be accountable to Mercy Partners, and Mercy Partners – rather than the Congregation – is responsible for ensuring the Catholic identity of the organisation continues and that the temporal goods are maintained for the mission. At the operational level, there is little, if any change. Mercy Partners is conscious that the role of canonical sponsor is based on strong relationships of trust and commitment.

HOW IS MERCY PARTNERS FUNDED?

When Mercy Partners was founded, the four Sisters of Mercy Congregations resourced the establishment of the Council and its supporting office for five years. Congregations seeking to transfer a ministry to Mercy Partners make a Foundation Donation. As ministries are transferred, the ministry contributes a Stewardship Fee to assist Mercy Partners to provide a range of sponsorship services.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN MERCY PARTNERS FORMATION?

Mercy Partners Formation is designed to provide ministry leaders with a sound base of Catholic Theology, Scripture and Church practices required for leadership of a Catholic ministry. The retreats provide time out for personal reflection and there are opportunities provided for networking with other ministry leaders. Each year these events bring together people from across the ministries in forums and gatherings. Mercy Partners develops resources and governance tools for ministry leaders. You can find out more about our formation on Mercy Partners website.

HOW CAN WE FIND OUT WHAT IS HAPPENING AT MERCY PARTNERS AND IN THE MINISTRIES?

Mercy Partners has a website at www.mercypartners.org.au and a Facebook page at facebook.com/mercypartnersaustralia where you will find information about formation, leadership, important events and resources for prayer and reflection. Mercy Partners also publishes a quarterly newsletter and *Mercy Moments*, a fortnightly reflection, which are available on the website and are emailed to ministry leaders and other interested people.



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