

Thirdlink Charity profile - Mirabel

Restoring a sense of hope and belonging to these children's lives still underpins every Mirabel program. It's what our volunteers, donors and supporters make possible.

Jane Rowe, Founder/CEO

OVERVIEW & HISTORY OF MIRABEL

Mirabel believes that every child deserves a childhood. This children's charity's mission is to break the destructive cycle of addiction and disadvantage. To do this, Mirabel delivers support programs for more than 1500 children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to their parents' drug use. Mirabel also provides crisis support and parenting assistance for the extended family faced with the responsibility of raising the children. Mirabel's vision is that every child has a childhood filled with love, hope and belonging.

Mirabel is an amazing organisation who makes us feel part of society when faced with the biggest challenge of our lives.

Michael, grandfather carer of Damien (5 years), who was orphaned when his mother died from a heroin overdose.

Mirabel has over 18 years' experience assisting disadvantaged children and families to reach their full potential. The organisation delivers professionally designed and evaluated services throughout Victoria and NSW that break the cycle of addiction and disadvantage. A recent Social Return on Investment study found that Mirabel's intervention created \$6.60 of social and economic value for every \$1 invested. The programs provide a long-term and holistic solution to a significant community problem – a problem that all levels of government acknowledge without currently being in a position to provide significant financial support.

Mirabel is the only organisation in Australia providing continual assistance for orphaned or abandoned children from birth to 18 years through its Programs for Kinship Families and Programs for Children and Youth.

Programs for **Kinship Families**

Assessment & Crisis Support

Kinship Carer Support Groups

Advocacy & Awareness

Mirabel House & Respite

Family Camps & Events

Volunteers

Programs for **Children & Youth**

Education

Therapeutic Groups

Recreation & Social Inclusion

Youth Support



TARGET BENEFICIARIES

The support of Third Link aims to assist Mirabel to grow and refine its programs while catering for increasing numbers of children of more than 20% each year. Mirabel is currently supporting 1500 disadvantaged children and young people who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental drug use. These young people remain the most profoundly overlooked casualties of substance abuse in our society.

The majority of Mirabel children live with aging grandparents who have given up their plans for retirement to provide a safe home for their grandchildren. These grandparents become physically and socially isolated from their community, due to the demands of raising children at a time when they would expect to be free from such responsibilities. Due to their earlier childhood experiences, the children in their care frequently have unique needs that require immediate attention and intervention.

Mirabel's programs of support ensure that vulnerable young people and their kinship carers receive sufficient practical and emotional support to enable the children to remain with their siblings in a nurturing family environment. Without tailored support from agencies like Mirabel, kinship carers would be unable to keep the children in their care and these vulnerable children would become yet another number in an overcrowded foster and residential care system.

Mirabel's care and support helped my family cope during our darkest times. We are so grateful to them and the generous supporters who make their work possible.

Gwen, kinship carer to 4 grandchildren

Mirabel is somewhere that I can talk about anything and they understand.

Lily (14)

EVIDENCE BASE

Left unaddressed, exposure to parental drug use affects the development and future of thousands of Australian children. This is further impacted by:

- The changing face of Australia's drug culture and the rise in methamphetamine use (ICE)
- Increased violence and psychosis witnessed by children, resulting in complex behaviours and greater trauma
- Lack of services and support for children and families living in rural and regional areas. They suffer extensive social disadvantage and are twice as likely as people in major cities to be using methamphetamines

The stigma associated with parental drug use together with the challenges of kinship care, often result in these young people becoming isolated and withdrawn from their kinship carers, peers, their communities and other social outlets. Relationships between young people, their carers and their peers frequently become strained as young people attempt to make sense of the grief and trauma they have experienced. Such complicating factors can result in problematic relationships, challenging behaviours and consequent further isolation of the young people.

The effectiveness of Mirabel's programs has been documented in a number of independent evaluations. The evaluations found that Mirabel's programs contribute to healthier and happier kinship families, help children to reach their full potential and stopped the destructive cycle of drug abuse in just one generation.



Mirabel has become a major part of my life and I can't imagine how I would have turned out if I didn't have their support. When I was on Mirabel activities I felt like I wouldn't be judged because everyone had something in common so I could act without care. They would give my Nan a break from the kids (we were a handful) and when my Nan needed some help they would be there. They changed my family, they became family.

Noah, 20 years old, Mirabel Alumni

HELPING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE TO THRIVE

Mirabel has recently established an Alumni Program that has connected with over 100 adults who were previously Mirabel children. It has been extremely rewarding to hear from these young adults and to learn of their many achievements.

The Mirabel Alumni have spoken enthusiastically about their experiences with Mirabel and the positive difference that ongoing contact made to their lives. This feedback has reinforced the enormity of the work being done and the positive difference that is being made to the lives of vulnerable families. We could not do this life-changing work without you.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Mirabel is experienced in delivering successful programs for vulnerable children and young people. The development of Mirabel's programs is the result of years of experience working with disadvantaged young people coupled with sound theoretical knowledge of successful program models. Mirabel's point of difference lies in its long-term commitment to these children and their kinship families, remaining a constant source of support and guidance until a child reaches 18.



Mirabel is a beacon of hope for children and their families. From its inception it has inspired me with the compassion, the sensitivity and the optimism it offers. A child is not seen as a 'client' of a service but as a precious individual belonging to a family and a community. All of the research on resilience, self-efficacy and intervening early in the life of children supports what Mirabel does.

Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott OAM, Australian Centre for Child Protection



Find out more about Mirabel at www.mirabelfoundation.org.au