

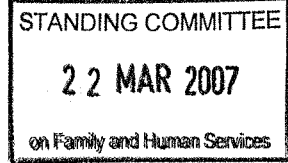
**Submission No: 64**

Supp to Sub:

AUTHORISED:

9/5/07

KS



The Secretary of the Committee  
Standing Committee of Family and Community Services  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

14 March 2007

***Submission to the Inquiry into the impact of illicit drug use on families***

Thank-you for the opportunity to respond to the '*Inquiry into the impact of illicit drug use on families*'. The Mirabel Foundation (Mirabel) supports this inquiry and welcomes the governments' commitment to addressing the enormous impact illicit drug use has on families. To date, children of drug-users have been largely overlooked in attempts to address the nation's illicit drug problem. Children who are exposed to parental drug use are amongst the most needy members of our community. By working together, responding appropriately and committing resources to support these children, we can provide a community response that addresses the unique needs of the children, ultimately breaking the destructive cycle of addiction.

Mirabel has produced three research publications that specifically highlight the issues surrounding parental drug use and the impact it has on the children and their kinship network. Typically it is the extended family members of these children, often their grandparents that are left to pick up the pieces after a parent dies or abandons their children due to their drug addiction. These publications entitled, 'Parental Drug Use - The Bigger Picture', 'The Effects of Parental Drug Use - Children in Kinship Care' and 'Parental Drug Use - A Recent Phenomenon' have been included as part of this submission for your consideration.

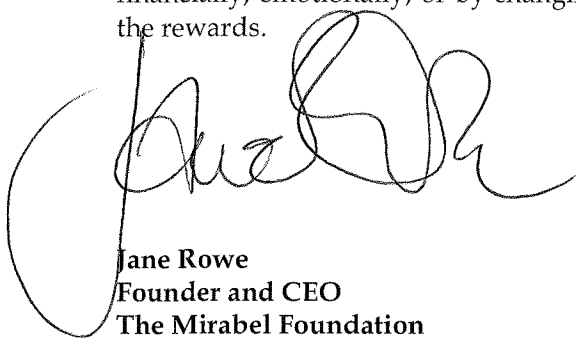
Local services and organisations need to be better equipped to be able to respond appropriately and support these children and their kinship families. This necessitates adequate resources to share knowledge and research regarding these target groups. The provision of training and information to local services and professionals needs to address what can be done for these families and what has been found to work to improve outcomes for the children.

*Jack was eleven years old when he came home from school to discover his Dad unconscious from a heroin overdose. Jack tried to revive him and then phoned an ambulance. It was too late. Two weeks later, Jack awoke to discover his mother*

lying on the floor. She had also died from an overdose. Jack made up a bottle for his baby brother, found food for his other younger brother and sister and took them all into another room so they would not have to see their mum. He cared for them until a neighbour happened to find them 18 hours later. Jack is now 14. He and his siblings live with their elderly grandparents. Because the grandparents are blood relatives they are not eligible for the same support as foster families. With the help of Mirabel, they have got through the past three difficult years. Jack's brother was so traumatised he suffered speech delay but with therapy is improving daily. His sister has been receiving counselling and no longer wets the bed. The baby who was suffering from malnutrition is now thriving. Jack's grandparents attend Mirabel's support groups regularly and now have a network of friends in similar circumstances. Jack used to talk about quitting school. Today he says he'd like to become a vet.

Mirabel was established in 1998 to assist children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental illicit drug use and are now in the care of extended family (kinship care). Mirabel is the only organisation in Australia specifically addressing the needs of this growing group of young people, the most profoundly overlooked casualties of illicit drug use. Mirabel supports children aged 0-17 years and works at restoring a child's sense of self-worth, belonging and hope for the future in order for them to reach their full potential as young adults. Mirabel's activities are all inspired by a *vision* based upon the belief that every child deserves a childhood and a *mission* to break the cycle of drug addiction.

Mirabel is committed to continuing as an access point for information and expertise in order to progress the cause for these vulnerable children and their kinship families. Mirabel invests in children and truly believes that this investment is the most compassionate and economic investment anyone can make. Whether it is done, financially, emotionally, or by changing the attitude of others, the community will reap the rewards.



**Jane Rowe**  
Founder and CEO  
The Mirabel Foundation  
T: (03) 9527 9422  
F: (03) 9527 9466  
[mirabel@mirabelfoundation.org.au](mailto:mirabel@mirabelfoundation.org.au)  
[www.mirabelfoundation.org.au](http://www.mirabelfoundation.org.au)