



# ‘There is a small window when you might be able to reach a child and address the trauma...’

**Jeff McMullen AM**

Mirabel Patron

When *60 Minutes* reporter Jeff McMullen was assigned to cover the early work of Mirabel, one thing struck him deeply. ‘When I met Jane, it seemed to me she had a strikingly good ear for hearing the individual child. To understand how each one of these kids, who had been so traumatised by their family experience, was still looking for a way to be heard and to be taken seriously and understood. Jane had a wonderful belief in the individual child. That’s my striking memory of first meeting her and seeing her at work,’ he said.

‘Jane had understood that there was this untold story about the children who just drifted into extended family care, but the families then were overburdened and stretched, abandoned by the state,’ he said.

She had an innate understanding that if you could listen, you could begin to provide the safety and the assurance to the child. She asked, ‘Are we listening to the child? Are we really hearing that kid explain what they need? They want to belong, they want to be safe, they want food, they want to be respected.’

Jeff said the resilience of children in terrible circumstances was something he saw regularly through his career. There is a small window when you might be able to reach a child and address the trauma, coax them out of that space, before the trauma becomes ingrained and possibly cyclical. ‘Mirabel focuses on that window,’ he said.

