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TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDING

JESSE MILNE

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Transcript Produced by  
**LAW IN ORDER PTY LIMITED**

ACN 086 329 044

T: 1300 004 667

W: [www.lawinorder.com.au](http://www.lawinorder.com.au)

  
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**<THE RECORDING HAS COMMENCED**

**INTERVIEWER:** Off we go. Do you want to introduce yourself?

5 **JESSE MILNE:** Okay. My name is Jesse. Jesse Milne. Waka Waka man from Queensland, and I'd just like to talk about my life, I guess, in general, and where I am today. So it started off as a kid. I was in and out of foster homes. I had ADHD, severe ADHD growing up. And it affected the way that the foster homes were able and capable of looking after me. So I ended up in residential care in the house for no good kids. Had a lot of burden with that, so it was lonely. [REDACTED] was a mental health patient at the time. All my life - all my childhood life. Never really had contact with [REDACTED], we all got separated through foster care and I was the only one that went into residential care because of no one in family foster care could actually handle me. From there, so loneliness and abandonment issues, they all sunk in. The only way to cope with that was through drugs and alcohol to mask the pain. And obviously, drugs and alcohol led to a life of crime, violence and so forth. I ended up going to prison, juvenile detention, ended up there. I think I was like 12, 13, went there for about a couple of months. First time in big boy's jail was Maryborough Correctional Centre in Queensland. I was out for a month through family violence. I struggled my whole life growing up. I had nobody to support, nothing.

I blame that on mostly foster homes and residential care. It's good that they're there, but they could have put me in my father's. Now I hate my - they could have put me in my father's care. There was a big talk of that, but I went to residential care. And, yeah, I turned my life to drugs, alcohol, crime, violence, in and out of prison. And eventually I went back, and seen my mum - was in mum's care for a bit longer, and it all turned around, and it was all bad again. My mum wasn't able to handle me because of ADHD and whatnot, and I've called her names and said many of nasty things to her, vice versa, her words to me and my words to her. It's just a disaster, because of I didn't know who she was, she didn't know who I was. She wasn't capable of looking after me. I always lived on the street. I slept on trains, done crime to make money, all throughout Queensland, just to get a good night's sleep. I'd get on a train and go to the next stop without paying for the train. Drunk, spending all my money on alcohol, drugs. I developed a - like a - I wasn't able to speak to people, to anybody without alcohol being in my system. I had to have to be drunk to be able to have a conversation with anyone and everyone.

And then, so my mum, she said when I got out of foster care a long time ago before this, but she said, if I ever catch you with needles, I'd disown you. And so when I was going in and out of the trains and I was touching needles, I never told her. And the violence between my mum and myself always kept on reoccurring. Didn't really talk to my brothers, on the run all the time on trains. And I thought, oh well, I'm only causing my mum and my family pain. So what I'll do is I'll go to a different state. I come here to Victoria doing the same thing, drinking, drug, going in and out of prison. Went to prison for robberies here in Victoria. And my mum gave me the - She was like, if you don't straighten yourself out, I'm going to disown you. So I went

to rehab, I went to Odyssey House Rehab. Got me off the drugs, but the motive was to have a relationship with my mum. I was able to fix a relationship with my mum - my mother. We had a phone relationship. We didn't have contact, but it was still something. And I held on to that because that's the only thing I had. Went in and out  
5 of prison again, other things. And then I got offered to go to this place.

I was seeking for some change myself. Always seeking for the better to be a better person. But I didn't know how until rehabs like Odyssey House. I've been to other rehabs, but always wanting change, but I just didn't suit me, and I wasn't able to  
10 change because of these rehabilitation places. So then I got offered to go to this Wulgunggo Ngalu place down at Macks Creek. There's a different, different light on rehabilitation. Real cultural, they teach us our ways. And if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be able to sit here, and just let go of all of this. So really, it's culturally appropriate, it's good for blackfellas. It's - they do dances, they put you into the  
15 community. They get you out of your comfort zone, into places that you feel uncomfortable. But then after time, it just, just makes sense. I'm clean, I haven't touched alcohol for a long time, or drugs. I haven't been to jail, and I owe it all to Wulgunggo Ngalu. If it wasn't for them, I'd probably be dead. And whilst I was in Wulgunggo Ngalu, the only family member I had, which was my mother, we had a  
20 phone relationship, she sadly passed away while I was in, while I was in Wulgunggo Ngalu. Took a lot out of me, but luckily I was in a really safe environment to be able to handle that. Yeah, I suggest Wulgunggo Ngalu to anyone and everyone, if you want change and some place to go.

25 **INTERVIEWER:** And do you feel, we know that a lot of people that sometimes go down the path that you have is that loss of connection, and to family and culture and things. Do you feel - what do you feel like Wulgunggo Ngalu gave you that was so different?

30 **JESSE MILNE:** Just open arms and understanding, like a bunch of their workers, they're all blackfellas, you know? But it's not like they just sat there and read books, like one of the workers there, Joey, he was also a participant in this place. You know, he's not just sat down there and read books and whatnot, he's went through the lifestyle. He can, he can -

35 **INTERVIEWER:** He's got lived experience now, they call it.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yes.

40 **INTERVIEWER:** So there's lots of those roles in mental health and things. People have lived experience to be able to share that.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah, and that's a really good thing. And that's what other places didn't have.

45 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah, and yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So how long were you there?

5 **JESSE MILNE:** I was there - well, you're only supposed to stay for three months, but I was, I was a wreck in my life at this time. This was in 2022, not long ago, two years ago. So you can only stay there for three months. Well, you can stay longer, I stay there for about eight months. Yeah, because I really knew that I needed that place.

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**INTERVIEWER:** And they obviously knew, and given your breakdown with your mum.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Circumstances if you were to leave.

**JESSE MILNE:** Oh I wouldn't, yeah. I don't know what I would have - would have done.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. That's amazing, that's such a positive thing to be given that opportunity to go back, connect with mob culture and to heal, and to really heal though.

25 **JESSE MILNE:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And have people around you that you felt understood you is - that's incredible. Now you're a proud father.

30 **JESSE MILNE:** Yes, I am, yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. Lovely little bubba.

**JESSE MILNE:** And one on the way.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. And do you feel it's helped you have like a healthy relationship now, as opposed to maybe the ones you were having beforehand and things?

40 **JESSE MILNE:** Yeah, 100% yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

45 **JESSE MILNE:** So yeah I recommend that place. If it wasn't for that place, like I said in my story, I'd probably be dead somewhere.

**INTERVIEWER:** So we definitely need more.

**JESSE MILNE:** More Wulgunggo Ngalu. And ones for women as well, because a lot of black Aboriginal women out there that struggle just as much, you know?

5 **INTERVIEWER:** Especially even to be able to take, you know, instead of taking bubs away from mums, send them to a place like that together where they learn.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah, where they learn. Yeah, that would be brilliant.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**JESSE MILNE:** That sends shivers down here eh?

15 **INTERVIEWER:** I've got goosebumps too.

**JESSE MILNE:** No that would be -

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

20 **JESSE MILNE:** Oh, wow. Yeah, that would be so good.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah (indistinct 00:10:00)

25 **JESSE MILNE:** Yeah, mine too. No, that would be really good.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. Thank you for sharing that story. I think it's really powerful to hear those positive things and like, for government to hear, stop investing in prisons and things -

30 **JESSE MILNE:** Yeah -

**INTERVIEWER:** Invest in the resources, listen to mob.

35 **JESSE MILNE:** Wulgunggo Ngalu was actually part of the justice system.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, yeah, it would be but probably it was advocated for by mob.

40 **JESSE MILNE:** Yeah, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** But yeah, fantastic. Is there anything else you want to add to the recording?

45 **JESSE MILNE:** No, not really, but - and that, that part, like I don't really like foster care, because of the way I was - I got traumatised and whatever. And then, you know, all the above anyway. So I reckon they need to listen more and they need to -

instead of relocating children in homes and residential care, they should look for family instead of putting them in there.

**INTERVIEWER:** That kinship.

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**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

10 **JESSE MILNE:** No, that's a big thing. Because if say if I back in the past they were like, oh yeah. So my father, he's a full time worker, right? I hate him, I hate him because (indistinct 00:11:23) put in my head, he wasn't there. He never cared, all because the foster care. Foster care - like he was a working man. He has like, two other kids. He looked after his other four kids with his (indistinct 00:11:37). So now  
15 I hate my dad, and he doesn't want me because I never knew him. I met him at 18.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you think that relationship could be repaired to somewhere down the line?

20 **JESSE MILNE:** No, no I couldn't.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, well, being a dad can change, sometimes perspectives.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** But I mean, as long as you know, you be that dad you didn't have.

**JESSE MILNE:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** That's a positive thing too. Right, I'll stop it if you like.

**<THE RECORDING CONCLUDED**

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