

# Nicole's highest aim to help women face domestic violence

Troels Sommerville

FOR four years, Nicole Brand endured an abusive relationship that ended in a three-and-a-half-hour assault by her partner.

She was kicked, punched and choked during a horrific attack. But in between the beatings, she managed to send a text message to friends – it read “help!”

They called the police and officers raced to the scene.

Now, nearly two years after escaping her abuser, who was handed a 12-month suspended sentence, the Cheltenham woman is back on her feet and ready to help other women.

Ms Brand is finishing a diploma in community services and case management. “I have my moments, but I’ve come a long way,” she said.

“Everything is going great, I’m stronger than I have ever been and I want to show other survivors that there is hope.”

Ms Brand will host a high tea to raise money for McAuley Community Services for Women.

It’s the state’s only safe house open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

McAuley chief executive Jocelyn Bignold said most of

## WHO TO CALL

- McAuley, 9371 6600
- Lifeline can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your state (24 hours), 131 114
- Safe steps Family Violence Response Centre, 1800 015 188 or 9322 3555
- Men’s Referral Service 1800 065 973

the families coming “arrive with only the clothes on their backs”.

“At the end of the week, they leave refreshed, having had access to medical, legal and financial advice as well as emotional support,” she said.

Ms Brand wants to raise more than \$1000 for McAuley and hoped others will join her and host their own morning tea.

“For women fleeing domestic violence, it takes a lot of courage to leave,” she said.

“So we need to do as much as we can to help them, and make sure they have what they need to make it.”

“I remember hitting rock bottom in the hospital, when they handed me a toothbrush and toothpaste, and I realised that was all I had to my name.”

Go to [mcauleycsw.org.au/highteaappeal](http://mcauleycsw.org.au/highteaappeal) or phone 9371 6600.



Nicole Brand is taking part in May's High Tea Appeal.

Picture: SUSAN WINDMILLER