



THE
WELLINGTON WOMEN'S
BOARDING HOUSE
TE WHARE AWHI WĀHINE O WHANGANUI-Ā-TARA

IN OUR WOMEN'S WORDS

MAREE'S STORY

After a short stay at a Women's Refuge safe house, arrangements were made for Maree* to stay at the Wellington Women's Boarding House, a charity organisation that offers women who are homeless or in transition six to nine months of low cost accommodation and support. Jane Emerson speaks to Maree.

NOWHERE TO GO

"I was a mess. I was actually self harming. I was just on the point of not being able to cope and contemplated suicide. I thought - I don't know what I'm doing, I don't know who to turn to," Maree says, reflecting on that time.

Maree remembers arriving at the house and noticing how peaceful it was and how safe it felt.

She recalls being told "here's your food cupboard. There's some food to get you by, and if you haven't got something and you need it, just ask one of us and we'll see if we've got it."

STEPPING OUTSIDE

Maree recalls the benefits of talking to people who understood what she was going through, and feeling their support.

Many of the women at the house "have been in similar situations, have come here for a break, have found that safety and that ability to be able to express themselves and tell their story", she says.

FINDING SUPPORT

"For me, initially going out of the house felt really unsafe in case I met him again."

But being told she could do it and given strategies by people who had lived through it themselves gave her the courage she needed.

"When I came back from having gone out, especially the first few times, it was like 'well done, you did it', she says.

That kind of support has helped me to face what really was a very challenging situation."

A NEW START

When I spoke with Maree she had been at the house only a few months, but said that even in that short time she had changed so much.

"Every time [people] see me [they] say 'wow', 'you're smiling now', 'you look so much better in yourself', 'you're a different person'".

She also found that, even after just a few months, she could already start to give back and pass on the messages and support that she had received when she first came to the house.

Messages like "honey, you're worth more than that", "you deserve better".

To find out more about the house go to wwbh.org.nz.

*Please note, Maree is not her real name. It was changed to protect her identity.