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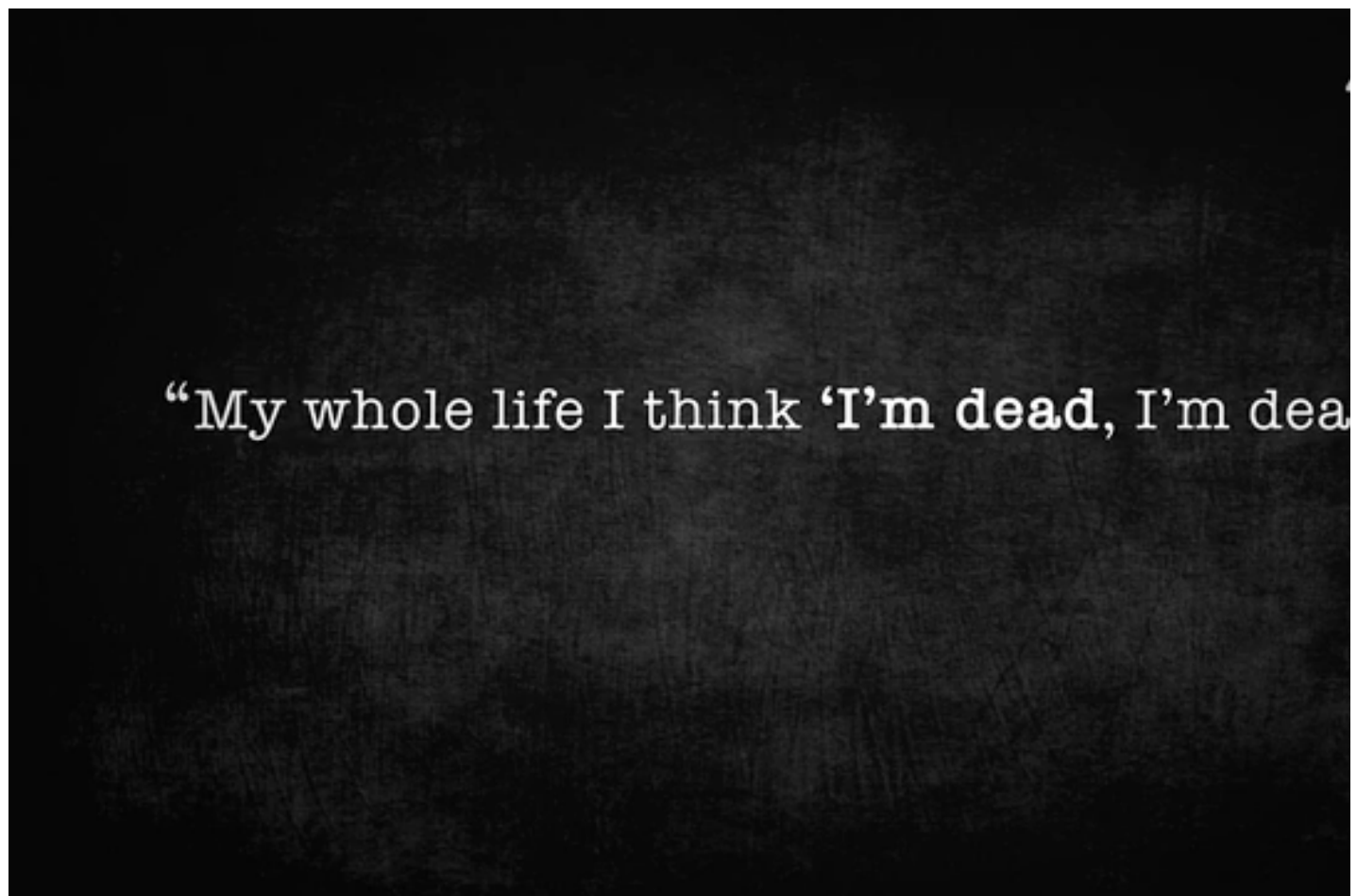
Lifestyle

Footy player Jake Frecker's vicious attack on girlfriend over text message

Kimbarlie O'Reilly was left with life-changing injuries after her boyfriend attacked her so badly she nearly lost an eye. **WARNING: Graphic**

Nicole Madigan

December 23, 2020 - 12:25PM [news.com.au](#)



One in four women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner

WARNING: Graphic

When Kimbarlie O'Reilly, 34, met charismatic Jake Frecker, 25, in 2018, they immediately became almost inseparable.

Ms O'Reilly became quickly smitten with Frecker who seemed funny and easygoing and played football for Dimboola Football Club in the south of Victoria.

But within weeks, Frecker began showing some unsettling signs, frequently putting down family and friends, and in particular, his former

Ms O'Reilly expressed concern, but was quickly shut down with excuses and gaslighting.

"For some reason I believed his every answer," she says.

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Kimbarlie O'Reilly with Jake Frecker.

Before long though, his emotional stability began to waver, often shifting between extreme affection to aggressive verbal abuse.

By then, Ms O'Reilly was under the spell, believing it was her responsibility to make things better.

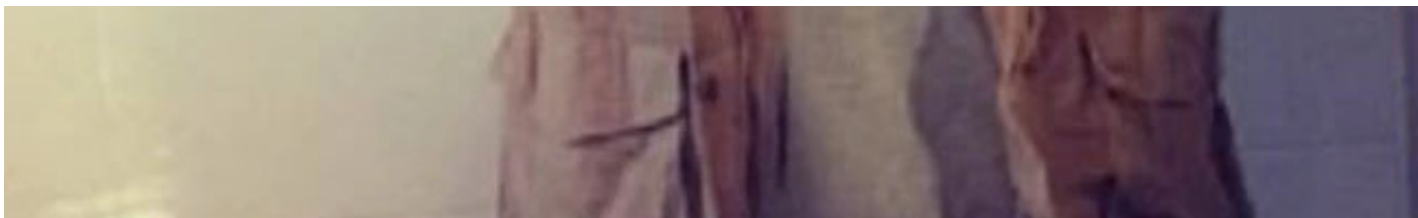
"The only option was to always try my hardest not to upset or annoy him," she says.

"I hoped that he would become happy over time, and I'd help him be better."

After months of aggressive outbursts and unpredictable behaviour, things took an even darker turn on January 16, 2019, when Frecker innocent text message and viciously attacked Ms O'Reilly.

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Kimbarlie was smitten with Jake Frecker at first.

For more than an hour, Frecker repeatedly punched Ms O'Reilly in the face, eye, and jaw – breaking her eye socket and cracking several

“He punched me causing me to fall and hit my head, he hit me again while I was on the ground and I went unconscious,” says Ms O'Rei

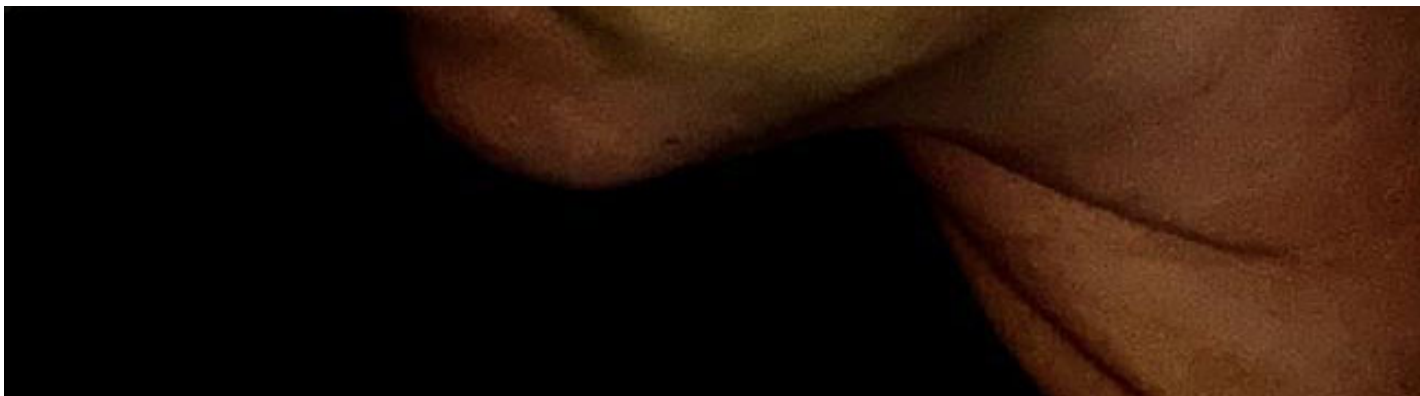
“He dragged me by my arms over the door inside, and I woke up to him pulling my legs inside the door so he could close it.

“I begged for an ambulance, but he said I still had a pulse and could get up myself.”

Hearing Frecker's screaming, neighbours called police who arrived to investigate, but Fecker told them Ms O'Reilly's injuries were the re she corroborated due to coercion and threats.

RELATED: [‘She died knowing help wasn’t coming’](#)





Kimbarlie O'Reilly was left with horrific injuries.



Jake Frecker did severe damage to her left eye.



Kimbarlie O'Reilly was left battered and bruised and terrified.

Fortunately, police didn't believe their version of events, immediately arresting Frecker. He was released on bail the following day, but 1 later after contacting Ms O'Reilly, in breach of his Intervention Order.

Ms O'Reilly then faced a long and drawn out court process, where the onus was on her to prove her story – a factor Claudia Maclean, pr Women's Legal Centre, says prevents many victims of domestic violence from coming forward.

"The reporting process can be very daunting for someone who has experienced family violence," says Ms Maclean.

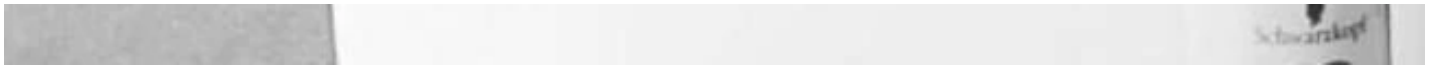
"One of the main concerns we hear from clients is, 'Will they believe me? What if they don't get charged? How will this affect the kids? job?'.

"In most family violence situations there has been emotional abuse, including gaslighting.

"So, if you have been told for years that no one believes you, or that you are crazy, or certain things didn't happen the way you remember, confidence is already eroded."

In June 2020, Jake Frecker, 26, was eventually sentenced to six years in jail, with a two year alcohol exclusion, a reduced sentence as a





Jake Frecker was jailed for six years.

The guilty plea also left room for Frecker to appeal his sentence, which he's now done, leaving Ms O'Reilly devastated, but not surprised.

"If the perpetrator doesn't have a criminal history, he gets another discount off his sentence, but as victims are generally too scared to go to court for their first offence," she says.

Ms Maclean says perpetrator appeals can have a devastating impact on the victim.

"They feel they are in a state of limbo, they are not sure about when matters will be over and whether they and their children will be safe. It impacts upon someone's capacity to move on with their life.

"It is like running a marathon, only being told once you have crossed the finished line, you need to turn around and run back to the start.

For Ms O'Reilly, this uncertainty is compounded by the long-term emotional and physical consequences of the attack which saw her almost

"PTSD, anxiety, depression – I was suicidal in March last year and spent some time in hospital," she says.

"My left hip gives me a lot of issues, I can't do the exercise I used to do, I can't walk up a lot of stairs, I have cortisone injections, and I have a scar on the left side of my face.

"I have heightened hearing and am still in flight or fight mode.

"My life isn't the same. That's what I'm trying to come to terms with."





Kimbarlie O'Reilly pictured in 2018 before she was attacked by Jake Frecker.





Kimbarlie today. She has been left with permanent damage to the left side of her face.

Ms Maclean says it's these very consequences that exacerbate the difficulty of the court process, which fails to put victims' best interests

"Dealing with family violence using the criminal justice process can seem like a square peg, round hole situation.

"You need strong evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the offence occurred and that the perpetrator was responsible. How family violence matters, the only evidence available are the witness statements of the victim and perpetrator.

"We also know it is common for people who have experienced trauma to experience fight, flight, freeze or fawn responses."

The little known "fawn response" is a way of dealing with trauma or a potentially dangerous situation by reverting to people pleasing to establish a sense of safety, according to healthline.com.

"This means people who have experienced trauma can come across as unreliable witnesses," Ms Maclean continued. "Meanwhile, if the articulate, confident and calm, they can present much better to the court."

Understanding the impacts of trauma and how this affects how people engage in family violence proceedings is crucial if we want better Maclean.

"We often seen women who are completely traumatised and broken by the legal system, whether it be criminal, family or civil law system

"If everyone involved in the family violence system, whether it be police, lawyers, barristers, magistrates, and judges, government and the better understanding of trauma and its effects, we would get beyond the victim blaming narrative.

"If this happened, I think there would be greater community action and ownership of addressing family violence instead of putting all the person who has experienced it."

Where to find help

If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual abuse or family violence contact:

- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service 24-hour helpline **1800 RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**
- 24-hour Emergency Accommodation helpline on **1800 800 588**
- Safe At Home helpline on **1800 633 937**
- SHE (free and confidential counselling and support) on **6278 9090**
- Sexual Assault Support Services on **6231 1811**, or after hours **6231 1817**
- Family Violence Crisis and Support Service on **1800 608 122**
- Bravehearts – Sexual Assault Support for Children on **1800 BRAVE 1**

Don't go it alone. Please reach out for help by contacting **Lifeline** on **13 11 14**

- Men who have anger, relationship or parenting issues, should contact the **Men's Referral Service** on **1300 766 491** or the **Don't Become That Man** helpline on **1300 243 413**

Nicole Madigan is a freelance journalist. Continue the conversation [@nicolelmadigan](https://twitter.com/nicolelmadigan)

