

LET'S GET LOUD, NO MORE SILENCE

Loud Fence was born from the personal stories that were told at The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse public hearings in Ballarat in 2015. The personal stories told had local people's heads spinning. People felt helpless. They were saying they wanted to do something but didn't know what. Maureen Hatcher, the instigator of the loud fence facebook page said "Some ribbons had started to appear on the gates at St Patricks College, in Ballarat. Two of us arranged to meet and tie ribbons onto the fence of the former Christian Brothers School in Ballarat to show support for our ex-classmates who had attended there. Maureen says "We debated what colour. Should they be white or silver? Then somebody said "No let's make them colourful – loud. There's been too much silence" That was the start of Loud Fence.

Loud Fence is showing support for survivors and standing in solidarity with victims. It is not a protest or a blame game. We believe that the ribbons give survivors hope and courage. They show families of victims that they are not alone. A ribbon on a fence does not necessarily mean abuse happened in that place, it simply means that a person or organisation cares."

Loud Fence has grown. There are now ribbons on fences, gates and letterboxes all over the world. People tie ribbons to show support, or to start a conversation. Survivors have returned to the site of their abuse to tie a ribbon – they say that it gives them strength and is a part of the healing process.

Maureen says "There *has* been too much silence. Ballarat needed to talk about child sexual assault. The conversation has been silenced in Ballarat for decades. The ribbons help people to start that conversation. We understand people are afraid and they want to protect the innocence of children. That's great; we need to make sure that the conversations are appropriate. For example, we tell young children that the ribbons are to remind big people to listen to young children."

Loud Fence has long outgrown Ballarat. Now many people in other communities are starting a Loud Fence to provide a voice to survivors and victims of sexual abuse in the community. Loud fence would like to assist any community who would like to start this imitative at their school, church or somewhere appropriate. If you'd like to start your own Loud Fence, contact Loud Fence Coordinator Trish Harrison pharrison@fastmail.com.au

No more silence.

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