

THE LODDON CONSORTIUM

— FOR GENDER EQUALITY + VIOLENCE PREVENTION —

March 3, 2021

Enough is enough. That's the message from women, everywhere.

They've had enough of their voices not being heard. Their stories not being believed.

Their history, silenced.

Their calls for action ignored.

And they're angry.

To maintain the rage and send a strong message to our national leaders that enough is enough, the Loddon Gender Equality and Violence Prevention Consortium is supporting the March 4 Justice and coordinating a Bendigo event to coincide with others across the country on March 15.

We are calling on the community to join us in a respectful gathering, to reflect on the experiences of victim survivors of sexual assault and other forms of abuse.

Everyone knows a woman who has been sexually assaulted or abused.

We know that in recent weeks, more and more women (and some men) are talking about experiences throughout their lives – and realising that those experiences were sexual assault, grooming or abuse.

They have been living in silence for too long. Sitting with the impact alone - because we have created a society where talking about sexual assault is taboo. Where the fear and shame of being blamed or judged has stopped people from seeking help.

This is the society we have created. Where victims are silenced by their perpetrator, the system and then by their community.

Sexual assault happens in every demographic, and women of all ages and backgrounds are more likely to be victims than men.

It is hard to hear their stories.

But how you feel should not be the reason someone does not feel safe to disclose what happened to them. Nor should how you feel silence them.

As a community it's time for us to really listen to victim survivors – and ask, what are we doing to contribute to a community that continues to make excuses for those who abuse them.

If every one of us knows a victim survivor, we know perpetrators.

How have you heard perpetrators being excused?

Why aren't we getting angry that the more people disclose they have been victims of sexual or other violence, the more we hear excuses for the 'good bloke'.

As Australian of the Year and survivor of sexual assault Grace Tame says, "we enable them to charm and manipulate not just their targets, but all of us at once, family, friends, colleagues and community members, and this must stop.

"Our discomfort, our fear, and resulting ignorance needs to stop giving perpetrators the protection, power and confidence that allows them to operate."

We support Women's March 4 Justice in calling for:

- A full police investigation of rape and sexual assault allegations, and misconduct by Members of Parliament and staff
- An independent wide-reaching review commissioned by the High Court of gendered violence in Australia's Parliaments including Federal Parliament
- Australia wide strategies for deep cultural change in workplaces, and the political and criminal justice systems, focused on promoting equality, respect, fairness, integrity and a level playing field for all
- A Federal ICAC – Independent Commission Against Corruption

As Grace says, it's time to make some noise Australia.

Let's get loud.

Bendigo March 4 Justice

March 15, 12 – 1 pm

View Point, Bendigo

- Please bring face masks, hand sanitiser and water.
- COVID-19 safe arrangements will be in place

The Consortium recognises these conversations are difficult for victim survivors and encourages you to reach out to support services.

We also encourage all members of the community to connect with women in your life, as current events may be impacting on them more than you are aware.

Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria - 03 5441 0430

Sexual Assault Crisis Line - 1800 806 292

1800 RESPECT - 1800 737 732

Centre for Non-Violence 1800 884 292

24-hour statewide safe steps Family Violence Response Centre crisis response line 1800 015 188.

In an emergency phone 000