

## HURT, HEALING, HOPE

Recently, St Malachy's Edenhope Parish Council organised an evening in response to the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse. The evening commenced with Eileen Rice, Principal of St Alipius Parish School, Ballarat East speaking of her story of leading a community through hurt, into a time of healing and towards a future of hope. Much of the focus during the Royal Commission was on Ballarat East. Eileen has been wonderful in supporting victims and survivors and was instrumental in promoting the ribbon fence which has been supported all around the world to recognise the harm that has been done to children in the past.

Rosemary Nolan, the sister of a victim and one of the first people in Edenhope to very bravely speak out about what has happened, shared her own very personal story. She was one of the members of a group who left Ballarat to visit Rome and was able to speak to Cardinal George Pell in Rome. She shared insights into this trip with us. Rosemary's focus was about looking to the future to make sure that this never happened again and that all children who are our most precious need to be protected and to be able to grow up in a world feeling safe from harm and abuse.

Jacinta Cook a counsellor from Centacare Ballarat explained the services that they offer in supporting people. Fr Andrew Hayes, our former Parish Priest, provided us with some reflection time with his songs and poetry giving insight into the mistreatment of children that has occurred over the generations and for many years.

The evening, while very confronting was a positive experience for those who attended. Sr Nicole who was in the audience spoke about the "shame" that people felt and that it could be a roadblock for coming to terms with what has happened in the past. People were ashamed that it had happened in their family, to their brother or sister or to someone they knew in the community while these children were in their care and were unsure how to deal with this.

The evening concluded with everyone having an opportunity to light a candle if they wished, to remember someone they knew who had been a victim or a survivor.

We extend our sincere thanks to Eileen, Rosemary, Jacinta and Fr Andrew for their support in helping this evening to happen. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.



*Angela Kealy*