

**From:** Sam W [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 6 December 2024 2:49 PM  
**To:** sentencingcouncil  
**Subject:** Submission on the Review of Section 21A(5A)

Dear Mr. McClellan and the NSW Sentencing Council,

My name is Sam Watson, and I am writing to share my support for the removal of good character references in sentencing, particularly in cases of child sexual abuse.

As a 22-year-old survivor of aggravated sexual assault, this issue is deeply personal to me. I made the difficult decision not to proceed with court action, largely due to the fear that I would not be believed or that my abuser could use good character references to diminish the severity of the crime or avoid more serious consequences. This fear, combined with the impact on my mental health, has been a significant burden that I have carried for years.

I believe the inclusion of good character references in sentencing, particularly for crimes of this nature, undermines justice and retraumatise survivors. It diminishes the seriousness of the crime and shifts focus away from the actual harm caused to victims.

I wholeheartedly support the 'Your Reference Ain't Relevant' campaign and its call to remove the last 21 words of section 21A(5A) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 (NSW). This is a necessary step to ensure that sentencing frameworks reflect the seriousness of these offences and prioritise the protection and dignity of survivors over the personal reputations of offenders.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Sincerely,

Sam Watson