

To the Sentencing Council,

I give thanks to the NSW Sentencing Council for the consideration, acknowledgment publication and consultation with the wider community in our support of the #YourReferenceAintRelevant campaign.

In support of the campaign, a court giving weight to character references affords protection both mentally and physically to Child S*x Offenders, who have systematically put themselves in positions where trust is placed and reasonably given. These very same people groom entire families, organisations, communities to earn trust, influence and respect to enable them to continue their predation on children, who we are all undeniably sworn to protect. When the courts place emphasis on character references, it erodes the trust parents, families and victims have in the judicial system and speaks to other offenders that in return for predatory behaviour, there will be leniency. We then continue to retraumatise our children and their families and, the cycle repeats.

As a survivor myself, who chose not to speak up, I can unequivocally say that I have no bias to this campaign. Being molested as a child has damaged my relationships with previous partners, the way I view myself, the relationships I had with friends and my family. I continue to unpack this almost 30 years later. With two children of my own now, it is incredibly disheartening and infuriating to know that the voices of the survivors, the cries of our children, the pain, would be diminished and minimised.

Mike B