



---

To the Sentencing Council of NSW,

I founded The Blue Butterfly Institute in 2021. We are a not-for-profit charity, based in NSW, volunteer run and lead, to support victim survivors of sexual trauma. We provide therapeutic services in different therapeutic modes, including counselling, EFT (Tapping), reiki, yoga, and have developed the monthly Cocoon support groups, operating in four locations (Wollondilly, Macarthur, Wingecarribee and online). All of our services are free to victim survivors of sexual trauma and their families.

We understand that the impact of sexual trauma extends into all aspects of a victim's life and that their families are impacted too. I started the Institute to make a real difference in the lives of victim survivors and in society by supporting the education of society to understand the impact of sexual trauma on the brain and behaviours of its victims.

We empower victim survivors to heal. We educate the broader community on trauma's impact. We advocate for change. We started because I wanted change for victims of sexual abuse; I didn't want them to be as wanting in life as I have been.

I was repeatedly molested as a child by a family member and then by family friends. The abuse started in the nineteen seventies and stopped in the eighties when my parents separated. I did not disclose until I had moved away from home for university and felt safe to do so. I was twenty-one. I did not fully disclose. I felt shame, guilt, pain and didn't trust myself or my memories. It has taken a lot of time, a lot of healing, for me to realise that none of it was my fault. It was something that adults did to me. Adults I trusted. Adults who appeared to be good people.

Who would believe me?

I live a rich life now, but it isn't the fullest life I would have liked to have. For so many years, I oscillated between functioning and extreme swings into depression and suicide ideation. As a result of my childhood trauma, I struggled to form healthy intimate relationships in adulthood. I lived in fear of men and what they were capable of. I didn't believe I was worthy of anything better than this, and I struggled to be vulnerable and healthy. I could not share what was done to me as a child. As a result of this, whilst highly educated, well read and well-travelled, and a really nice person, I was unable to find a healthy relationship to be able to mother children and build a family. I pursued IVF with a sperm donor, resulting in a miscarriage and a tonne of grief.

I had just wanted to be 'normal'.

---

| ABN: 33 674 349 414

[www.thebluebutterflyinstitute.org.au](http://www.thebluebutterflyinstitute.org.au)



This opportunity was stolen from me by the perpetrators of my childhood abuse. I am living a life sentence for what they did to me, and what their behaviour and their choices, as adults, stole from me. It sounds dramatic, I know, but really, it is truth.

I have thrived in spite of it, but only because I have chosen to live a good life on my own terms. And now, to pay my blessings forward so that other victim survivors do not need to struggle in the darkness, alone, as they heal. I still spiral from time to time, I am still impacted by my childhood abuse, and I still desire a healthy physically intimate relationship. Maybe because then I will feel that the last frontier in my healing will be achieved. Validation that I am actually okay. One day ...

When we permit a perpetrator of sexual violence to provide good character references, and when these good character references impact their sentencing in a positive way for them, it takes away the rights of the victim who will live with the impact of what was done to them by that perpetrator for their entire life, in one way or another. That is, if they survive.

Sentencing has the power to affirm and validate a victim survivor, and it has the power to negate and invalidate that survivor's experiences. It holds the power for impacting the trajectory of the victim's life. It is important to remember, the victim of sexual violence is not responsible for what the perpetrator did. Only the perpetrator can and should be held responsible. The victim's voice needs to hold greater weight than anyone else's voice when it comes to sentencing. And a good character reference should not even be permitted.

My perpetrators would have submitted them. They were 'good' people. But not to me.

Sincerely,

Tina Meyer BA, DipEd, MA, MCouns.  
Founder and President of The Blue Butterfly Institute

[REDACTED]