

From: [Barbara Braithwaite](#)
To: [sentencingcouncil](#)
Subject: Good character in sentencing submission
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To whom it may concern

I'd like to add to the current consultations about 'Good character in sentencing'. particularly relating to cases of child/other sexual abuse and rape.

I feel the two components of 'good character' and 'sentencing' are completely unrelated. In my own personal situation, I have two family members, both involved in a case of long-term, child sexual abuse - one a perpetrator and the other the victim.

The character of the offender bears no relevance to the crime he committed.

Who is likely to be asked to give a character reference in such a case? A boss, a personal friend, a family relative? None of these people would have any idea of the abhorrent behaviour of the individual they represent in their reference.

These kinds of crimes are hidden. Hidden from everyone. The perpetrator ensures that no one has any knowledge of their repugnant behaviour.

How could anyone write a good reference about someone they really don't know, at a significant level, deep enough to comment on that person's entire character? What does their good work record or 'pleasant to others in the office' have to do with their loathsome actions outside of the workplace?

The perpetrator has two lives, two existences, two characters. What's reflected about them in a character reference is totally irrelevant to their crime and presentation in court for the crime they've committed.

What of the victim? Is a character reference asked for, for them? No relevance either. But they're the ones whose lives have been irreparably affected by their assailant.

Do you think they ever find solace in knowing their attacker has a 'good character'? - is pleasant at the office? - is honest dealing with the boss's money? - has been a good friend for X number of years? All that is completely irrelevant - almost offensive.

Disappointingly, it seems that even those of 'good character' do bad things. People who find pleasure in abhorrent acts need help. They're ill. Their sentence must reflect their actions. No one of a pure, honest, kind and loving 'good' character attacks or grooms his victim.

Resources to support the victims is what's needed - not time wasted gathering immaterial opinions from naive character referees.

Please be reminded who should be the first priority here. The victim should be the receiver of the Court's full support, empathy and understanding.

Kind regards
Barbara Braithwaite

I pay my respect to the Traditional Custodians of this land; past, present and emerging.