

From: [Caitlin Gibson](#)
To: [sentencingcouncil](#)
Subject: Your reference ain't relevant
Date: Monday, 9 December 2024 1:26:16 PM

Good morning,

I'm a concerned citizen, writing in support of #yourreferenceaintrelevant campaign to remove good character references from sentencing in cases of child sexual abuse, domestic violence and rape.

All available evidence on this subject, often provided by abusers themselves, points clearly to the fact that those inclined to abuse others groom their character witnesses as carefully as they groom their victims. Very often the presence of excellent character witness statements points towards greater misconduct (e.g., sophistication and premeditation of abuse).

It doesn't matter that an abuser was nice to another person, usually a high authority, well-connected, powerful member of the community. What matters is that in private, on someone who was vulnerable, they inflicted significant and unacceptable harm.

Character references 'muddy the water', as they are intended to by abusers, diminish the apparent severity of these crimes, and re-traumatise survivors. It's time to prioritise justice for survivors.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Caitlin Gibson