

From: Millie Bartlett [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 10 December 2024 4:46 PM
To: sentencingcouncil
Subject: ReferenceAintRelevant Campaign

One could argue that the guile and deceptive tactics employed by sexual predators in order to gain the trust of children, families and communities is also further employed with “good character” references in court. The trick is the same and works efficiently on each level.

Childhood sexual abuse is such an evil and abhorrent crime and its consequences are routinely skirted by criminals who have a carefully curated a reputation as a “good bloke”.

As others have said before me, the “good character” of a murderer is not considered in a legal trial. Simply because we cannot see or quantify the trauma and psychological scarring inflicted upon victims of childhood sexual abuse does not mean that it is any less than the terror and loss of life a murder victim experiences. In many cases, survivors of childhood sexual abuse take their own lives.

We need a societal rejection of “good character” references inside our court and legal systems, especially where it pertains to sexual crimes against children. It is used as a literal “get out of jail free” card. It is not enough for victims to reach court and be let down again and again. The crime of sexual assault of premeditative, calculated and profoundly cruel. We need to be the voice standing up for all of the children who cannot advocate for themselves by making the consequences of these crimes ironclad, consistent and unswayed by a mere opinion, a “good” reference. “Good character” references are an insane and ridiculous loophole routinely exploited by predators.

We cannot continue to fail victims like this.

Thank you.