

**From:** [Liz Quinn](#)  
**To:** [sentencingcouncil](mailto:sentencingcouncil)  
**Subject:** Submission on the Use of Good Character References in Sentencing  
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Liz Quinn

11 February, 2025

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GPO Box 31  
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To the NSW Sentencing Council,

RE : Submission on the Use of Good Character References in Sentencing

I write this submission as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. I strongly support the removal of good character references as a mitigating factor in sentencing for child sex offenders, rapists, and perpetrators of domestic violence. The fact that courts still allow offenders to be described as “good blokes”, “good women” or “upstanding members of the community” is not only a betrayal of victims but a grotesque distortion of justice.

For survivors like me, the legal process is already re-traumatising. To then watch an abuser’s community, colleagues, or friends vouch for their so-called good character is devastating. It invalidates our suffering, minimises their crimes, and shifts the focus away from the lifelong damage they have caused. No amount of community involvement or professional success changes the fact that they are predators.

It is appalling that an offender’s social standing can be used to lessen their sentence. These are not crimes of impulse or misunderstanding. They are deliberate acts of cruelty and control. When courts give weight to good character references, they reinforce the idea that a person’s reputation matters more than the suffering of their victims. It sends a message that these crimes are somehow less serious when committed by someone who appears respectable.

I know firsthand the damage these crimes cause. I also know how isolating it is to see an abuser defended by those who refuse to acknowledge the truth. Survivors are already silenced too often. Our voices should be the ones that matter in court, not those of people trying to shield perpetrators from the consequences of their actions.

The Sentencing Council has an opportunity to make a real difference. Good character must never be a defence for those who commit acts of abuse, rape, or violence. It is time to put an end to this harmful practice and stand unequivocally with victims.

Yours sincerely,  
Liz Quinn