

To: sentencingcouncil@justice.nsw.gov.au

9 December 2024

To whom it may concern,

As a survivor of child sexual abuse, I strongly support the #YourReferenceAintRelevant campaign and urge the removal of good character references in sentencing for crimes such as child sexual abuse, domestic violence, and rape.

Hearing my offender's so-called "good character" highlighted during the legal process was profoundly retraumatising. Despite being convicted of indecently assaulting four children between 1993 and 1995, he was described in court as someone who "believed he had a wonderful rapport with children," volunteered to care for elderly people after being charged, and "continued to be a worthwhile member of the community." His lawyer also cited his wartime service and his 40-year ownership of a bike shop as evidence of his character.

Almost 30 years later, reading these remarks is still excruciating. These statements not only diminish the gravity of his crimes but also ignore how offenders often exploit their perceived trustworthiness to commit abuse.

At sentencing, the magistrate acknowledged the offender had "obtained the trust of parents to babysit their children and blatantly breached that trust for his own sexual gratification." Yet, my offender received just an 18-month sentence, with a non-parole period of three months.

Good character references served to minimise his actions and failed to reflect the harm he caused. His "good character" was the very tool he used to gain my parents' trust and access to their two young children, as well as several other local families.

Allowing such references retraumatizes survivors and undermines justice. I urge the Sentencing Council to recommend the removal of good character references in these cases. The legal system must prioritise survivors and reflect the true severity of these crimes.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kind regards,



(Please remove my name before publishing)