

From: [REDACTED]
To: sentencingcouncil
Subject: Submission: Good Character References in Sentencing
Date: Thursday, 6 February 2025 9:14:15 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to highlight the importance of reviewing section 21A(5A) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 (NSW) and other relevant sections regarding the use of "good character" in sentencing. This is particularly applicable to cases of child sex abuse.

As a victim-survivor myself, as well as a concerned community member and activist for women and children's rights, I understand firsthand how impactful injustice can be to someone's life. I believe this very campaign highlights the flaws in our justice system, and the devastating, long lasting effects it has on those that seek justice from it. It is a deeply personal matter to me.

In my personal experience, seeking justice has been nothing but traumatic, complex and extremely overwhelming. Reliving trauma is never going to be an easy task, but the current state of our justice system certainly does not make it any easier.

When I sought my own justice, it wasn't until the friends and family of the accused came forward with good character references that I had to take a step back for my mental health. These were people I personally knew, and once was friends with myself. These people encouraged the accuser to behave poorly, even being a witness to the crimes themselves, yet they did not tell the truth.

I believe it is an extremely biased take to hear these references in seriousness. Greatly diminishing the severity of crimes committed and preventing the accused from taking accountability and facing adequate consequences. After stepping down to regain my health, seeking therapy and a new plan to find justice, it did not take long before NSW Police suspended the case.

I know that if it weren't for good character references put forward in my case, I would've been able to see the case through, instead of having to dissect it in therapy sessions at my own expense.

Offenders should not be given the ability to use good character references to make themselves look better and potentially get out of their crimes or receive a lesser sentence.

While I spend my time advocating for victim-survivors and struggling to go back to work, my abuser is still working with women and children. Still encouraged by the same friends to repeat the same behaviours, because so far they've had no consequences. It's time to stop failing to protect children and victim-survivors like myself.

I write in full support of the #YourReferenceAintRelevant campaign and in favour of removing of good character references in sentencing.

Please remove my name prior to publishing to protect my identity.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.