

To whom it may concern,

I am writing you to express my support of the "your reference ain't relevant" campaign and the need to abolish "good character" references for convicted child sex offenders.

As the mother of a victim (and a victim myself and the daughter of a victim), and having gone through the criminal justice system, I have first hand experience of how damaging it is to victims. The system on a whole is traumatic for victims and their families and to have to sit there and hear about how "good" the abuser apparently is only adds to the trauma. It is completely devastating and demoralising for the victim, and feeds the perpetrators ego, sense of entitlement and no wrong doing.

More so, the people who write these references get to do so with no complete understanding of or connection to the entire abusive situation or the irreparable damage it has done to the victim, most of them would not have heard the full story, they do not have to sit there and listen to the victim impact statements and how the abuse has ruined the victims life.

Good character refers to the "enduring moral qualities" of a person.

"Morality" - Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour.

"enduring"- lasting over a period of time; durable.

Therefore, Child sex offenders, regardless of previous character, CAN NOT and should not be labeled as a good character. Once they have crossed that line, their previous history becomes irrelevant. If anything, their apparent "good character" should be used against them, because they know the difference between right and wrong yet they CHOSE to offend against children. And it also needs to be understood that they use their "good character" to groom victims and families which is how they are able to get close to their victims in the first place.

I hope you take the submissions from all of us, particularly those of us with lived experience, seriously and acknowledge how damaging good character references are. There is no place for good character references when it comes to child sex offences.

Thank you,

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Daughter of CSA victim, CSA victim and mother of CSA victim.