

8th July, 2024

Mr. McClellan and the NSW Sentencing Council,

RE: Your Reference Ain't Relevant Campaign

I am writing to you to provide my input on the review of section 21A (5A) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 (NSW) and other relevant sections concerning the use of “good character” in sentencing, particularly for child sexual abuse cases.

As a qualified Social Worker, who has previously worked in child sexual assault investigation with the NSW Joint Child Protection Response Program (JCPRP) consisting of NSW Health, NSW Police Force Child Abuse and Sex Crimes Unit, and the Department of Communities and Justice, I believe it is crucial to ensure that our sentencing framework reflects the seriousness of child sexual offences and holds perpetrators fully accountable for their actions. The use of good character reference in these cases often undermines the gravity of the crime and the harm caused to victims.

In so many cases, child sexual abuse commences through the use of grooming, where the perpetrator being described as having “good character” is often a tactful weapon used to perpetrate these crimes. The perpetrator often uses their status within their community and family systems to further silence and discredit their victims, thus “good character references” should not be a consideration in the court of law for these cases.

I believe that good character references should not be considered as they can diminish the severity of the offences and hinder justice for victims. It is essential to prioritise the protection and well-being of victims and ensure that perpetrators are held completely accountable for their actions and crimes.

I wholeheartedly support the “Your Reference Ain't Relevant” campaign's call to remove the last 21 words of your current provision.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kindest regards,



Chantelle Towers
Social Worker
B. Social Work (honours)