

## Penalties and Sentences (Sexual Offences) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

**Submission No:** 17  
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**Attachments:** No attachment

### Submitter Comments:

I am writing in support of the #YourReferenceAintRelevant movement, calling for the abolition or strict limitation of character references in criminal sentencing—particularly in cases involving sexual assault, rape, child abuse, or domestic violence.

**Key Points:**

1. **Irrelevance to the Crime** Character references often focus on how the perpetrator behaves in everyday life or within the community, which has no bearing on the violent or predatory nature of their offence. A person's "good standing" in some circles does not excuse or mitigate serious harm inflicted on victims.
2. **Power Imbalance and Victim Silencing** Allowing glowing character references—often written by people in positions of authority or power—can retraumatise victims, overshadow their voices, and reinforce harmful narratives that minimise the severity of the crime.
3. **Enabling Perpetrator Privilege** Perpetrators from privileged backgrounds often receive more persuasive or high-profile character references, skewing sentencing outcomes and perpetuating inequality in the justice system. Justice should be based on actions, not social connections.
4. **Undermining Public Trust** When convicted offenders receive leniency based on character references, it erodes public confidence in the justice system. Sentencing must reflect the gravity of the crime and the need to protect the community—not the perpetrator's social reputation.
5. **Focus on Harm, Not Image** In cases of gendered violence, the focus must remain on the harm caused and the safety of the public. Mitigating sentences with references distracts from the victim's suffering and the perpetrator's responsibility.

I urge the Queensland Parliament to prioritise victim-centred justice and remove the option for character references in the sentencing process for serious violent and sexual offences.