


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

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I am a rape survivor. I have carried the burden of that experience for over 60 years. When I was 16, I was dragged into a car, driven to Cronulla beach sand dunes and raped by four men from that car plus two more who followed it. I did not know these men, but was aware of the name of one of them.

I have never forgotten the amusement of my rapists when I told the one whose name I knew that I would report him to the police. I was told that they would all stand up in court and say that they had all had consensual intercourse with me and I would be discredited completely.

This experience resulted in my being charged with being “Exposed to Moral Danger”. I tried to explain to the police that I had been raped but again was laughed at and told that “all you little [REDACTED] cry rape.”

I am now a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of women and girls. All my life I have tried to stand up for justice for rape victims in any way that I could.

For this reason, I wholeheartedly support the proposal from the #YourReferenceAintRelevant campaign calling for a total abolition of good character references in the sentencing of convicted rapists, child sex offenders, and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Allowing these references to be considered as a defence enables abusers to weaponise their social status to minimise harm. Justice should be based on the facts of the case — not on who the offender knows or who is willing to lie for them.

The mental and emotional scars inflicted on victims of domestic violence, rape, or child sexual abuse do not fade with time. They are permanent and the distress can be relived many years later when triggered by reports in the media and issues such as this legislation.

No woman or child deserves abuse. Please do not let their abusers’ “character” be used as a weapon against them. “Character” means nothing because there is no excuse for abuse.

Thank you for considering my submission.