

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

Submission No: 25
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Submitter Comments:

I am writing in regards to the review of use of "good character" in sentencing for perpetrators of abuse. I fully support all the recommendations put forward by Survivor-advocates Harrison James and Jarad Grice and the "Your Reference Ain't Relevant campaign". I am a victim survivor of child sex abuse. My perpetrator abused me from the age of three until I was seven years old. I never had the opportunity to see justice as I was too scared to pursue it and he died when I was in my twenties. I will never forget the sting of seeing my perpetrator on the front page of the newspaper being celebrated for being a pillar in the community with a big smile on his face knowing what he had done to me. The charmed and dangerous perpetrators use these cloaks to hide in plain sight and once proven guilty it is crazy to me that these tactics are being used again to lighten their punishments. It also feeds into the narrative that "nice" people couldn't possibly commit such heinous acts and we know that's not true. I know that what happened to me was really awful but I am grateful for lots of the privileges I have had in my life- supportive family, good friends, education and access to therapy but not all victims are so lucky. The pain and trauma of what happened to me has deeply affected my ability to have healthy intimate relationships and it's really sad. I have a great job, I am a good mum and have lots of beautiful friends but when it comes to relationships with men I really struggle due to being abused in my first intimate relationship. It completely rewired my brain and my ability to trust and unfortunately I have subconsciously ended up pushing away very safe and healthy people in exchange for people that don't treat me very nicely due to my internal self-loathing and disrupted attachment. I am working on this and hopefully will be able to get on top of it but I see this as a life sentence. Why should perpetrators of sexual violence get so much leniency while their victims are left to suffer? Happy to be contacted as required.

Kind regards, Amy Mackenzie