

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

Submission No: 151
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Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

I wholeheartedly support the “your reference ain’t relevant campaign”. As professional working with victims of sexual abuse every day, the devastating impact of this abuse changes the trajectory of a victims life and forever effects the way they interact with the others, and perceive the world as a whole.

Allowing character references from convicted offenders goes against all that we know about sexual abuse; all the research clearly lays out that offenders groom those around the victim, as well as the victim themselves, in order to gain their trust before exploiting them by abusing them. This is particularly relevant to child sexual abuse, in which I have seen character references significantly reduce the sentence time and time again for convicted child abusers.

The courts are allowing the very tools used to commit these heinous crimes to be considered as a positive character trait. They use these when considering punishment and the risk of reoffending - even though these characteristics were what enabled the offenders to carry out the crimes in the first place. The contradiction to all scientific evidence in this field is astounding and Australias criminal justice system should be ashamed at how they have failed victims.

This must end, we owe victims of abuse respect and should be upholding their dignity after the offender has stripped them of their entire self worth and identity. References are not relevant when you have been convicted of a crime.

In your everyday life you would not hear of a child being abused and then follow that up with, ‘well yeah but their employer said their a really good person’ or ‘yeah but their mum said this is really out of character and their usually an upstanding citizen’. This is an abhorrent continuation fo the abuse offenders perpetrate towards their victims, using their power even after conviction to continue to destroy victims psychologically - and our judicial systems aid them in doing so.

Please do your research and put an end to this cycle of enabling offenders to continue the mental deflation of victims long after the abuse has stopped. Protect victims, hold offenders accountable.