

TEACH US * CONSENT

To the NSW Parliamentary Committee,

We write to you today to affirm our support for the abolition of good character references in the state of NSW, as they relate to crimes of sexual violence. We do so as the state records a 10 per cent increase in rates of sexual violence from 2024-25, and reporting rates have halved (BOSCAR, 2025) - a devastating representation of how our justice system is - or isn't - working for victim-survivors of sexual violence.

In this context, where sexual violence is already being under-reported and increasingly committed, good character references only serve to exacerbate a culture where sexual violence is normalised, and accountability is devalued.

Indeed, good character references strengthens the harmful but common perception that people who are respected by the community or positively contribute to their community can't commit sexual violence. An overwhelming body of evidence tells us that sexual violence against women is four times more likely to occur by someone within our communities that we know, and even love, than a rogue stranger (ABS, 2021). To abolish these references would be an acknowledgement that not only do seemingly "good" people commit sexual violence, but that they often seek roles within community that improve their reputation, in order to be unsuspecting and evade accountability.

Beyond these harms that good character references can bring, they also inherently act as a form of intimidation toward victim-survivors, further discourage reporting, diminish accountability, and privilege the perpetrators future and reputation, over that of the victim-survivor and crucially, broader society's safety.

We strongly support the removal of good character references for perpetrators who have committed sexual violence.

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27/03/2026