

Full Stop Australia welcomes important change for sexual violence survivors after NSW Government agree that **#YourReferenceAintRelevant**

Date: 1 February 2026

Notes to Editors:

The contents of this press release can be used as quotes attributable to **Full Stop Australia CEO, Karen Bevan**.

Full Stop Australia welcomes today's announcement that the NSW Government will scrap 'good character' references in sentencing proceedings. The reform comes after campaigning led by child sexual abuse survivor-advocates and founders of the *Your Reference Ain't Relevant* campaign, Harrison James and Jarad Grice.

We know that trials and the reporting process re-traumatise many victim-survivors seeking accountability and justice and this prevents many more from coming forward to report sexual assault. Removing 'good character' references in sentencing will reduce some of that burden. We want this to signal a shift in the way NSW responds to sexual violence.

"For too long, survivors have watched as offenders' social capital outweigh their trauma. This reform corrects that injustice. To see years of hard-fought advocacy deliver this reform is a dream come true." said Your Reference Ain't Relevant co-founder Harrison James.

This reform means that victim-survivors will no longer be exposed to the opinions of the offenders' friends, family and community in court after they have been convicted. In many cases, particularly of child sexual abuse, offender's perceived trust and 'good character' often forms part of the grooming process. The reform extends beyond child sexual abuse to include all offenses. Notably adult sexual assault and domestic violence. We welcome the broader scope of the reform.

"Gender-based violence is about power, and this reform targets people that use their position of power and privilege to perpetrate harm and then wield that social power to reduce their sentence. No more." said Full Stop Australia CEO, Karen Bevan.

Full Stop Australia's history on the frontline of sexual violence response and advocacy is extensive. As Australia's first rape crisis service, Full Stop Australia has witnessed the slow change to the legal landscape and acknowledge that this is an important moment for NSW.

To achieve real change that backs in this reform we will need major increased investment in frontline services in sexual violence, child sexual abuse and domestic and family violence.

Full Stop Australia is seeking a \$1 million-dollar annual increase in funding for the NSW Sexual Violence Helpline in the upcoming state budget to help us reach out proactively to more victim-survivors of sexual violence. We support the calls by Domestic Violence NSW for a 50% baseline increase in funding for frontline domestic violence services in NSW.

24/7, free and confidential trauma-specialist counselling for anyone in Australia impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence.

1800 385 578

Putting a **Full Stop** to sexual, domestic and family violence.



This reform should send a message: survivor experiences matter, and that the impact of sexual violence cannot be discounted based on offenders' perceived character or reputation. We want this to be the beginning of the "good bloke" narrative.

In early 2025, the Australian Law Reform Commission released its final report from their Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence, citing several submissions had been made on the topic of character evidence in sentencing. The report states that '*the outcome of this process [NSW Sentencing Council review] should inform any further reform to how character evidence is used.*'

We hope that other jurisdictions are taking note of today's announcement. Full Stop Australia calls for a nationally consistent approach to character evidence in sentencing.

Full Stop Australia wants victim-survivors of sexual violence to know that we believe you, you are not alone and help is available. Regardless of your gender, sexuality, identity or whether you choose to formally report – we are here to help you.

Anyone in NSW impacted by sexual violence can contact the NSW Sexual Violence Helpline to access 24/7, free and confidential trauma-specialist counselling. Call 1800 424 017 or webchat at fullstop.org.au

If you're not in NSW, anyone across Australia impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence can call 1800 FULLSTOP (1800 385 578).

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