

Media Release

The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP
Attorney General
Minister for Planning



Friday, 27 February 2026

LABOR IS SCRAPPING 'GOOD CHARACTER' REFERENCES IN COURT

If you commit a crime like rape or assault, you will no longer be able to rely on claims about your 'good character' to reduce your sentence.

The Allan Labor Government will remove the use of so-called 'good character' references at sentencing.

Perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions without excuses.

Victim-survivors should not hear the people who hurt them described in a positive light to diminish their offending.

Under our changes, courts will no longer consider evidence of 'good character' as a mitigating factor in sentencing.

This already applies in some cases of child sexual abuse – our change will make it system-wide.

Courts can still consider the other factors they usually would when sentencing, such as the chance of reoffending.

The Attorney-General will bring legislation to the Parliament in the middle of the year.

These laws add to the Labor Government's changes to make life safer for Victorians including tougher laws for coercive control, stalking and family violence.

Under Labor, community safety comes first.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny

"Victim-survivors of crimes are having to sit in court and hear that the person who harmed them is a 'good person' – that compounds the trauma, diminishes their experience and can't continue."

"Under Labor, safety comes first, and perpetrators must be held accountable for their crimes without excuses."