Dr Philip and Mrs Pam Dawson

I read your paper on the Young People Sexual Offences, and note other States have a "no defence" of mistaken age, at various ages.

I wonder why it is that in most parts of the law, ignorance is no excuse, but here it apparently is? In the commercial world it is "buyer beware" which amounts to the same thing. The onus should have been on those purchasers of sex with the 12 year old, and no defence of mistaken age should be permissible. Clearly the community is outraged by the apparent impotence of the law to deal satisfactorily with this, and if it doesn’t respond to the community's satisfaction, respect for the law will diminish (further).

If the age of consent (to sex) is 16, then it should be no defence at below this age, otherwise why have the law? If age of "consent" to other things (eg medical procedures, financial transactions etc) is currently at a de facto age of 14 (which is the advice given to Medical Practitioners) then make it 14. I can’t see any other option to be consistent with the rest of the law, and with community expectations, and with what "the reasonable man in the street" would expect.

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