

Mornington Peninsula Leader

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‘ They spent their whole childhood hoping someone would set them free. And yet even now they are still living with a past that can only be described as hell on earth ’

Victims want justice

By Matt Doran

A PSYCHOLOGIST is demanding a Royal Commission over the police investigation of a child sex abuse scandal that rocked Mornington in the early 1990s.

Dr Reina Michaelson also wants the Royal Commission to examine possible police involvement in an organised pedophile ring.

She said the lack of justice was placing victims' at risk.

It was highly likely an organised pedophile network was still operating in Mornington, she said.

Dr Michaelson, who is representing several victims, said the children "passionately want justice".

"They spent their whole childhood hoping someone would set them free," Dr Michaelson said.

"And yet even now they are still living with a past that can only be described as hell on earth."

Dr Michaelson helped trigger a State Ombudsman's investigation in June, 2002, into the police inquiry of widespread sex abuse allegations at the Mornington Child Care Centre and Nursery School.

Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon said last week the Ombudsman's office would release its report soon.

Dr Michaelson told the *Leader* last week a Royal Commission was urgently needed.

"The investigation has been ongoing for two years and has been repeatedly hampered," Dr Michaelson said.

Documents relating to the investigation, seen by the *Leader*, show an Ethical Standards Department (ESD) officer was removed from the investigation for "incompetence" after he failed to pass on vital information from two witnesses.

The documents also showed that



Dr Reina Michaelson wants a probe into the police investigation of a child sex abuse scandal that rocked Mornington in the 1990s. Picture: RENAE DROOP. N45ML802

confidential information on alleged police misconduct, provided to Crime Stoppers in 2000 on the condition that it only be given to ESD, was in fact passed to the police at the centre of the allegations.

The Mornington Child Care Centre and Nursery School was the subject of widespread sex abuse allegations in the early 1990s.

Sixteen children from the centre told

police they had been taken to a nearby house in Mornington where they were sexually abused.

A Department of Human Services inquiry later found that centre owners Norman and Alison Shulver, who vehemently deny all allegations, had "permitted the abuse to occur or were involved in that abuse".

No police charges were laid.

A Victoria Police spokesman last

week said: "Police have confirmed that allegations involving the mishandling of child abuse inquiries, and claims of corrupt police behaviour, have been referred to the Ombudsman and the Ethical Standards Department is also investigating.

"At this stage they are only allegations and have yet to be substantiated."

For more coverage on the call for a Royal Commission and background on the scandal – Pages 8-9.

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