

‘ 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

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."



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

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

# police investigation



Back issues of the Leader covering the case.

## How it all unfolded . . .

ALLEGATIONS of sexual abuse at the Mornington Child Care Centre and Nursery School rocked the town in 1991-92.

Here is a sequence of the events of the scandal as it unfolded.

■ Allegations of child sexual abuse involving the Mornington Child Care Centre and Nursery School, run by Norman and Alison Shulver, are reported to police by several parents.

A number of parents remove their children from the centre.

Norman Shulver calls a meeting at the centre with the parents.

■ Parents who believe their children have been abused meet police at a hall in Barkly St, Mornington, where police offer support and updates on the investigation.

At a public meeting at the Mornington Information Centre, parents call for the childcare centre to be closed until the investigation is completed and set up a support group.

Police reveal the childcare centre was involved in allegations of child abuse in 1988.

Mr Shulver "resigns" as parents step up their fight to have the centre closed.

Police charge a 45-year-old woman with having tried to drive her vehicle into Alison Shulver at the front of the childcare centre.

■ The centre changes its name to the Peninsula Child Care Centre. Mr Shulver says neither he nor his wife work there.

The Leader reports the newly-named centre is not registered with the Office of Pre-School and Child Care (Community Services Victoria).

An Office of Pre-School and Child Care inquiry starts to determine whether the Shulvers are suitable proprietors of the centre.

■ The State Government shuts down the centre after the inquiry finds the Shulvers

"permitted the abuse to occur or were involved in that abuse".

Police are instructed not to comment on the inquiry's findings.

Monash Medical Centre sexual assault clinic and Mornington Council set up support services.

■ The Shulvers appeal against the deregistration of the centre to the Supreme Court.

■ The Supreme Court dismisses the appeal.

Mr Shulver challenges police to charge him.

■ Parents deliver a brochure in Mornington and Mt Martha, offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of those responsible for alleged child abuse.

The Shulvers move interstate.

■ April 1994: The Crimes Compensation Tribunal awards damages of up to \$20,000 to more than 30 applicants for pain and suffering after toddlers were allegedly abused at the Mornington centre.

■ May 1995: Norman Shulver tells the Sunday Herald Sun that he has run out of money and opportunities for legal challenges.

■ June 2002: Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon refers complaints about the mishandling of the case by police to the Victorian Ombudsman.

■ May 2003: An Ethical Standards Department officer is stood down from the Ombudsman's investigation for "incompetence" after he failed to pass on information from two key witnesses.

■ April 2004: Psychologist Dr Reina Michaelson alleges the Ombudsman's investigation is marred by corruption and calls for an urgent royal commission into organised pedophilia in Victoria.



Dr Reina Michaelson.

Picture: RENAE DROOP. N45ML802

## Doctor's years of dedication

DR REINA Michaelson, who sparked the Ombudsman's current investigation, is a high achiever in the world of child psychology.

The 33-year-old completed her PhD in psychology at Victoria University in 2001.

Her thesis, which was awarded the vice-chancellor's medal for excellence in research, focused on ways to prevent child sexual abuse.

Dr Michaelson is the executive director of the Child Sexual Abuse

Prevention Program Inc, a non-profit organisation that runs awareness seminars for children aged 5-18 in Victorian schools.

The program, which also provides seminars for teachers and information nights for parents, has been implemented internationally in developing countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam.

The Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program Inc won the Australian Institute of Criminology's Violence Prevention Award in 1998.

It also won the 2001 National Child Abuse Prevention Award for Innovation from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

Dr Michaelson was Young Australian of the Year (for community service) in 2001. She is also a member of Trauma and Abuse Care Group International (TACGI), an organisation assisting survivors of severe trauma and abuse.

■ The Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program Inc can be contacted on 0409 188 572.

**Limited vacancies available for girls in Year 3, 2005**

### Enrolment Information Sessions

**Junior Campus**  
(Held in Minimbah Library)  
**Wednesday 12 May, 11am**  
**Wednesday 9 June, 11am**

**Senior Campus**  
(Held in the Jago Centre)  
**Tuesday 11 May, 8pm**  
**Tuesday 8 June, 8pm**

For further information, or to arrange a tour of the school, please contact the Director of Enrolments,  
**Mr Bruce McCallum on 5971 1108.**

Enrolment at the Junior Campus ensures a guaranteed place at our Senior Campus, currently with waiting lists until 2008.

# Call for probe into

## Justice is too late for family

By Matt Doran

At 7am on an ordinary morning in the early 1990s, police rapped on the door of a house in Mt Martha, waiting to tell a mother and a father their two toddlers were believed to have been victims of pedophilia.

They did it subtly, of course, by asking the parents to see if their children had ever heard of "red Kenny" or "Daddy Kenny".

A number of children from a Mornington childcare centre had earlier told the police these were nicknames used by men who had sexually abused them.

"I will never forget the look on my daughter's face when she heard those names. She immediately ran behind her mother saying 'save me mummy, save me'," said John (not his real name).

John was later told by his eldest daughter that the same men had held her underwater and bent her little finger backwards if she didn't do as she was told.

John knew in his heart then that the bruises on his youngest daughters' cheek had not been caused by a "playground accident".

His children, "two little heroes", were among at least 16 others abused at the Mornington Child Care Centre and Nursery School in the 1990s.

Children told police and their parents they were taken from the centre in a van to a house in Mornington where they were sexually and physically abused by a group of adults.

Some described being abused by

adults wearing "funny clothes" including police uniforms, clown suits and "black capes with tails".

The centre was deregistered after a Department of Human Services inquiry found that the centre's owners, Norman and Alison Shulver, had "permitted the abuse to occur or were involved in that abuse".

No police charges were laid, but in 1994 the Crimes Compensation Tribunal awarded damages of up to \$20,000 to more than 30 applicants affected by the alleged abuse.

Now a decade later, Victoria's Ombudsman is due to release a report on the way police handled their investigation.

But that does not comfort John or his eldest daughter, now 16, who are still traumatised.

"My eldest daughter still needs counselling and is afraid to sleep by herself. She is on anti-depressants and . . . has no friends," John said.

"She believes she was the victim of organised pedophilia and she still fears for her life.

"It is too late for justice for my family. Justice can not repair my marriage or make up for the trauma my daughter has suffered. But there needs to be justice for the community, so that people's faith in the system can be restored."

Psychologist Dr Reina Michaelson, who is representing survivors of abuse throughout Victoria, helped instigate the Ombudsman's investigation in 2002.

She first raised concerns with Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon in 2001, about the way the original police investigation was conducted after a "well-hidden" file containing allegations linking police to child sex offences was stolen from her home.

But now Dr Michaelson has lost faith in the Ombudsman's internal investigation.

Documents obtained by the *Leader* show that in April last year an Ethical Standards Department officer was removed from the investigation for "incompetence" after he failed to pass on vital information from two witnesses.

One witness claimed that a house used by pedophiles in Mornington belonged to a policeman.

The other witness gave information about the existence of a video tape that showed a number of men dressed in police uniforms abusing children.

The investigator said he could not recall talking about a video with the witness, but a check of telephone records showed he did have such a conversation.

"These children were the victims of a highly organised and protected pedophile group that continues to operate throughout Victoria," Dr Michaelson said.

"While this type of corruption

continues, these children don't have a hope of getting justice.

"They desperately want to present their testimonies and evidence, but they need to be given a forum where they can do this in safety and where the investigative process is truly independent. We urgently need a Royal Commission."

Hetty Johnston, founder of Queensland child abuse prevention charity Bravehearts, came to Victoria last month to meet five children who claim to be victims of organised pedophile networks.

She backed the call for a Royal Commission.

"There is a whole line-up of credible individuals saying the same things about the same people," she said.

"Children's lives are at risk and we cannot afford to keep burying the truth."



Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon.

Picture: KRIS REICHL. N49H0311

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