

Investigation into Equestrian SA bullying allegations finds 'serious matters'

AN independent report into allegations of bullying of children at Equestrian South Australia has found “serious matters”. Meanwhile, the chief of the body has left the organisation.

Exclusive — Craig Cook

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AN independent report into allegations of bullying of children at Equestrian South Australia has found “serious matters”, The Advertiser can reveal.

But ESA chairman Peter Graham said the findings of the report by a former police investigator should not be linked to executive officer, Sharon Cimarosti, leaving the organisation.

Ms Cimarosti, a former general manager at the Strathalbyn race club, did not return to work from leave in June that was extended in July without explanation by the ESA board.

Mr Graham would not confirm if she resigned or was dismissed.

“Ms Cimarosti did not return from annual leave, however remained employed by ESA until her departure,” he told *The Advertiser*.

“The Board considers employment matters confidential, however Ms Cimarosti is under no confidentiality agreement re her departure and we thank her for her time with ESA and wish her well in the future.”

The Advertiser has attempted to contact Ms Cimarosti for comment.

Equestrian South Australia has been in crisis for months after mass resignations and allegations of bullying. Picture: Dylan Coker

The bullying investigation centred around allegations made by two sets of parents of juniors competing at the Interschool Equestrian state championships in April.

Former police detective, Trevor Jenkins, conducted an investigation into complaints that included the verbal abuse of children.

“We thank parents that brought matters to our attention and also thank those whom offered freely to talk with the independent investigator,” Mr Graham added.

“Where the Board considers it appropriate some volunteers and others will or have be reminded of their obligations as per our Codes of Conduct in varying roles.

“The board is still awaiting responses from others re more serious matters.”

Mass resignations and [allegations of a toxic culture](#) in the organisation, including bullying and abuse, has seen ESA in crisis for months.

ESA chairman Joe Hooper quit suddenly in July.

His resignation followed that of more than a dozen administrators and an [attempt to take over the board](#) by a group of seven dissident members.

The ESA Annual General meeting, moved forward to September 18, will see the election of three positions on the nine member board.

The Advertiser understands there are at least five nominations for the board, requiring a vote of the ESA membership of around 700.

Electronic voting, regarded as more secure and convenient, is being considered for the election.

Mr Graham, a former mayoral candidate for Gawler Council, said he would retain his role on the board but will not be continuing as chairman.

“I need my life back,” he said.

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