

Child sex offender heads Aboriginal corporation

JESSICA STRUTT

The chief executive of an Aboriginal Corporation based in Roebourne is a convicted child sex offender who was also fined in the 1990s for possessing a pornographic video tape of people having sex with animals.

Laurie Poland, chief executive of Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation, pleaded guilty in 1992 to three charges of aggravated indecent assault, two of aggravated sexual assault and one of attempted procurement.

At the time of his conviction, the Supreme Court was told that Laurence Michael Poland, was a senior public servant when he repeatedly molested a 12-year-old girl while on business trips to Kalgoorlie-Boulder. The prosecutor in the case, Lloyd Davies, told the court that Poland, who was a senior projects officer with the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority at the time, would phone a friend who would bring the girl to his motel room where both men

would abuse her.

Mr Davies told the court the girl, who was 10 when the abuse started, often cried during the assaults, which had been committed against her will ever since they began in 1990.

Mr Poland's name surfaced in another newspaper recently in relation to former premier turned lobbyist, Peter Dowding, doing free legal and strategic advice for the Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation.

Mr Poland yesterday told *The West Australian* he had been with Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation for about a year, having moved from another corporation.

But when *The West Australian* asked him about his convictions from the 1990s, Mr Poland hung up the phone.

Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse spokeswoman Michelle Stubbs said she was astounded that a person with such serious child sex convictions was employed in such a capacity

at an Aboriginal corporation.

Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation chair Jill Churnside said the organisation knew of Mr Poland's convictions when he applied for the job. She said Mr Poland had done a great job in his role with the corporation and was a well liked member of the local community.

Mr Dowding said that Mr Poland did not work with children in his job with the corporation and everybody in the community knew of his convictions.

"I've know him since the 70s," he said. "I'd be really seriously disappointed if having done the time that it embarrassed him because he's been a fantastic contributor to the community."

Mr Poland was fined \$1500 in 1990 for possessing a pornographic video tape which police told the court included "graphic scenes of humans having sex with mice, dogs, pigs and donkeys".