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Mt Eliza ashram members to decide on future in wake of abuse allegations

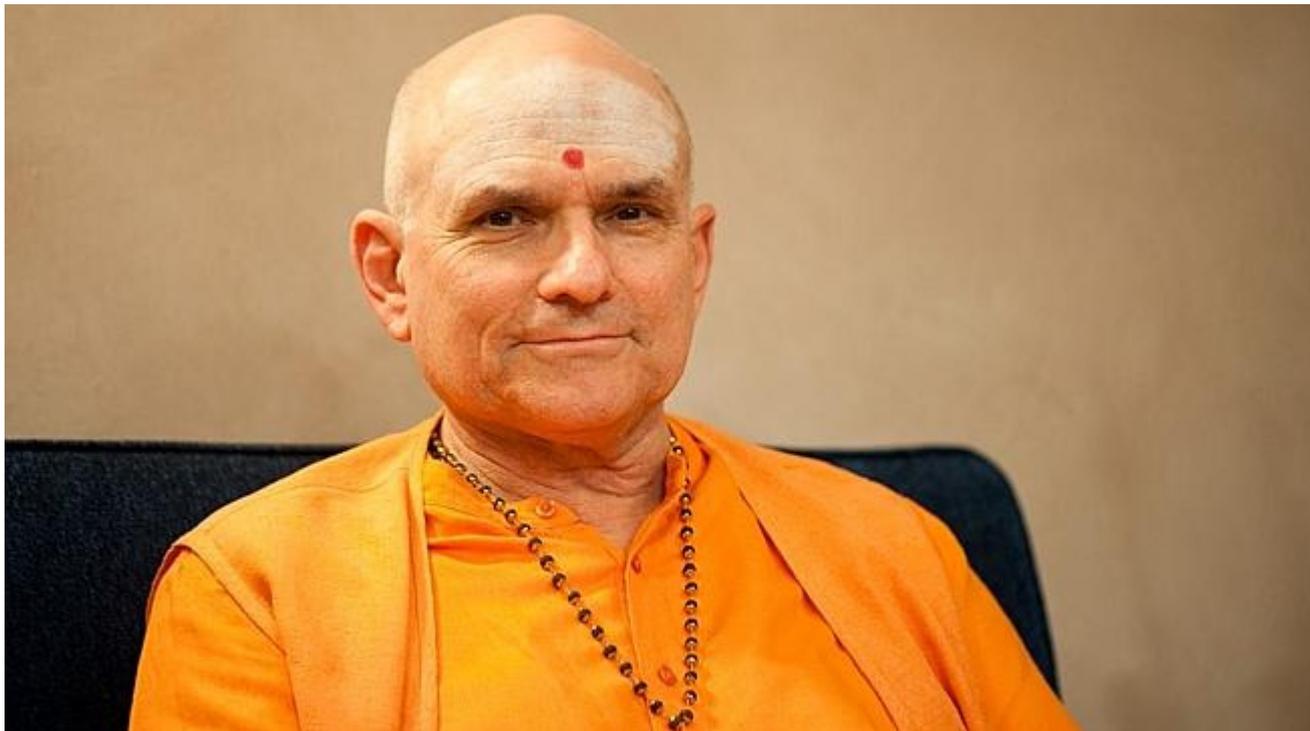
- by: Eddie Morton
- From: Mornington Peninsula Leader
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Russell Kruckman, aka Swami Shankarananda, is at the centre of abuse allegations.

Source: Supplied

MEMBERS of a Mt Eliza ashram at the centre of multiple sexual abuse allegations have agreed to cease the centre's operations, liquidate its assets and pay out all victims impacted by the claims.

Worrells Solvency and Forensic Accountants today confirmed that Shiva Yoga Inc, the parent company of the Shiva School of Mediation and Yoga in Mt Eliza, was placed into voluntary liquidation on April 23.

Members of the school resolved to liquidate the company and its assets.

The school's latest financial records show assets valued at more than \$2.9 million.

Paul Burness from Worrells said the decision to shut down the Mt Eliza ashram did not come easily.

"There was no doubt that it was a very difficult decision to make for the members and that they had been proactive in putting the organisation into the hands of independent party," he said.

"I am cognisant of the allegations against the ashram and would be dealing with all potential claims as part of the liquidation process."

According to a statement issued by Worrells, Shiva Yoga Inc aims to pay all creditors in full within 12 months of the winding up.

Multiple sexual abuse allegations against ex-director of the centre Swami Shankarananda — also known as Russell Kruckman — surfaced in December and later prompted a police investigation.

Mr Kruckman has since stepped down from his position at the ashram.

Frankston Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) said the investigation was ongoing.

Shiva Yoga's closure comes after the executive committee sent an email on April 15 to all members of the school warning that the pending legal actions relating to the sexual abuse allegations "will mean a probable freeze over the assets".

Late last month, the industry peak body Yoga Australia suspended Shiva School of Meditation's teacher training course accreditation in response to the allegations and the police involvement.

Leader contacted Mr Kruckman's lawyer and requested comment but is yet to receive a response.

Stephen Stanford, chairman of the Shiva School Inc. declined to comment on the matter.

Alix Osborn, senior associate at Madgwicks Lawyers, Shiva Yoga Inc's legal counsel, did not respond to the Leader's request for comment.

The Shiva School of Meditation and Yoga did not return requests for comment.

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