

MUSLIM parents who allowed their young daughter to hold a racist placard at a rally did her a terrible injustice, the state's new anti-discrimination boss says.

The offensive placard was paraded at a city rally in 2009 to protest against Israel's invasion of the Gaza strip that cost more than 1000 lives.

In a reference to the Holocaust, it featured a swastika and the words ``Jews haven't learn(t)''.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission chairman John Searle said police needed better training so they could take swift action under racial vilification laws.

It is believed the issue was raised with the equal opportunity commission but no formal complaint was made because the culprits could not be identified.

Mr Searle, who is Jewish, said yesterday that the placard represented a disgraceful and outrageous threat.

`` But there is also the terrible injustice that in reality is being done to this little girl," he said.

`` Presumably her parents bear significant responsibility for educating her, giving her the message and teaching her in a way that most of our community would find unacceptable and offensive."

Asked if the commission should look at the matter again, Mr Searle said: ``I'd need to think very carefully if anything could be done because no one knows who the perpetrator was."

But he said the incident revealed that police needed more training for the state's racial hatred laws.

`` Many of the police (at the rally) who were seeing this probably would not have realised that a potential criminal offence was being committed in terms of incitement to racial hatred," he said.

Islamic Council of Victoria spokeswoman Sherene Hassan said Muslims were outraged by the placard and strongly condemned it at the time.

`` These kinds of messages of hate are appalling and the fact that a child was involved makes it even more contemptible," she said.

Mr Searle, a lawyer, was appointed equal opportunity commission chairman this week by the Baillieu Government. He is also president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria.