Police chase woman for false rape complaint costs

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By: Tony Stickley

Police are seeking nearly $5000 from a woman they claim wasted their time over a false rape complaint.

The case highlights a dilemma for police, who do not want to discourage women from reporting sexual abuse.

But they say that when an accusation is blatantly untrue, they will lay a charge of making a false complaint and seek reparation for investigation costs.

Detective Senior Sergeant Richard Middleton, of the Manukau Crime Squad, said that of 75 sexual complaints in his area since Christmas, about 10 were believed fake.

"But we would only charge them with making a false complaint where the complaint was clearly false," he said.

A handful of women have faced prosecution.

One claimed she had been kidnapped, raped and locked in the boot of a car.

Police sought reparation from her to cover about 40 hours of police time at $80 an hour, plus medical expenses, which can be up to $1500.

In the current case, which has yet to come to court, it is understood police want the woman to pay for more that 50 hours of officers' time plus medical expenses.

Mr Middleton said detectives sometimes interviewed women who spun a web of lies to "cover up indiscretions" or simply to seek publicity.
He said police took complaints of this "abhorrent crime" very seriously, but false complaints were "not acceptable".