

The Fiji Times ONLINE

Eight let off

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COURT proceedings against eight persons charged with rape were terminated after it was discovered that complainants provided false information to the police.

Police Commissioner Ben Groenewald said providing false information was a serious matter as it constituted a crime if someone gave a false statement to police.

Mr Groenewald said police echoed the same concerns highlighted by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in the rise of false complaints which had put a lot of pressure on the resources of the force.

"We will have to wait for the files from ODPP and then on evaluation, we will take further steps necessary," Mr Groenewald said.

DPP Christopher Pryde, in a statement, stated his concern at the increase in the number of false or malicious complaints being laid with police and brought before the courts.

He said police took sexual assault complaints seriously and when people made false complaints for some ulterior motive, the integrity of the criminal justice system was affected.

"Not only are considerable resources wasted but innocent people's lives are disrupted and great potential harm can result not only for the falsely accused person, but for victims of crime in having their complaints taken seriously," Mr Pryde said.

"The State takes these matters very seriously and any person giving false or deliberately misleading information to the police or who attempts to interfere in a prosecution will be charged with an offence."

In the past two months, the ODPP has terminated court proceedings against eight persons charged with rape when it was discovered that the complainants in each case had provided false information to the police.

"Currently, seven persons are being prosecuted in the courts for a range of offences including giving false information to a public servant and attempting to pervert the course of justice," Mr Pryde said.

Mr Groenewald said they would have to wait for the files from the ODPP and on evaluation, they would take further steps if necessary as they did not have in detail the number of cases involved.

Meanwhile, statistics released by the ODPP for rape and sexual offences for the month of May revealed that 28 people were charged with 48 separate incidents of serious sexual offences.

These included two people under the age of 18 years.

The offences consisted of rape (35), defilement (6), indecent assault (4), attempted rape (2), and abduction of a person under 18 years of age with intent to have carnal knowledge (1).

Two rape cases were discontinued before the courts after one was withdrawn and a discontinuance (nolle prosequi) was filed for the other.

<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=310705>