

# 'Victim' laid false complaint

13 Sep, 2010 12:09pm

## Hawkes Bay Today

Chantelle Marie ' />

A Hastings security officer who claimed she had been abducted and raped by two men has admitted taking police on a "wild goose chase".

Chantelle Marie O'Connell, 29, walked into the Hastings Police Station on August 27 and said she had been raped by two men that morning.

She told officers the men had abducted her, thrown her into a van and driven to a house in Pakipaki where she was raped.

She claimed she'd later managed to escape out a window and walk back to a friend's address. Police conducted a specialist interview, medical examination and investigation.

Later enquiries using CCTV footage, cellphone records and witnesses revealed she had in fact left a Hastings bar consensually with a man.

He had later dropped her off at her friend's address.

In Hastings District Court last week she pleaded guilty to a charge of making a false statement.

Her lawyer, Brian Webby, said O'Connell was under stress at the time and didn't realise the subsequent police investigation would be "so intense".

Court summaries showed police spent 33 hours investigating the complaint. Judge Bridget Mackintosh warned O'Connell that making such accusations was perilous.

"It [complaint] casts suspicions on people, which can be fairly detrimental to them," she said.

She ordered O'Connell repay the medical examination fees and related expenses totalling \$1039.

"Police were tied up investigating this wild goose chase when there was other work they could have been doing."

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