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Former cops admit to perjury

Mar 10, 2004 9:37 PM

Former undercover police officers have told the Holmes programme how police trained them to lie and commit perjury.

The officers publicly incriminated themselves because they say they want to expose alleged cover-ups by senior police.

They say illegal drug use, perjury and evidence tampering have been a dirty secret within the New Zealand police force for 20 years.

The officers say they smoked cannabis and then claimed in court they didn't inhale.

Former officer Frank Meissen claims that lying under oath was part of an unofficial policy referred to as "simulation".



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"Simulation means telling people you pretended to smoke when you actually got really, really stoned. And then you get up in court and lead the court to believe that your memory and recall were not affected by that drug use," Meissen said.

The officers want compensation for continued drug-associated problems or other stress-related illness. And they say more importantly they want recognition the undercover programme is flawed.

Former officer Wendy Heath said she also smoked drugs in a police "simulation".

"It's far more important to me that the police stop hurting...their own people. Far more important to me that the programme stops and the police clean up their act," Heath said.

They say they have tried to raise their concerns with police, politicians and the Police Complaints Authority but their calls for an inquiry into the under-cover programme have been fobbed off at every turn.

The former officers have also made allegations against high-profile senior police officer Greg O'Connor who currently fronts the Police Association.

The former officers showed the Holmes programme photos of what they say is O'Connor rolling a cannabis cigarette while working undercover in the 1980s. They say exposing O'Connor will gain greater exposure for their cause. But O'Connor said he only smoked cannabis in an operational situation.

Undercover police officers are allowed to smoke marijuana if their life or their operation is at risk.

The former officers believe their lives and careers have been wrecked by the undercover programme and they are demanding a royal commission of inquiry.

Police Minister George Hawkins refused to comment saying the matter is before the courts.



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