

I Cook boss labels crime grants a 'joke'

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

I Cook Foods director Ian Cook has labelled a crime-prevention fund in Greater Dandenong as a "sick joke".

Last week, the State's Crime Prevention Minister Natalie Hutchins announced the \$700,000 Empowering Communities grant to tackle the causes of crime.

Mr Cook said the fund was a "sad stunt" and "pathetic spin job which is wasting taxpayers' money".

"Surely this is a sick joke.

"If Ms Hutchins wants to do her job, she should stop having photos with members of the Council and instead push Victoria Police to finally lay charges against (those) who destroyed I Cook Foods."

Mr Cook is suing health authorities over the forced shutdown of his Dandenong South commercial kitchen as part of a listeria investi-

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Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

gation in early 2019.

He says his business was corruptly destroyed, as well as the livelihoods of 41 employees and his family.

With the help of retired police detectives, he

has alleged that officials tampered evidence, such as a slug planted on the factory floor by a Greater Dandenong Council food inspector.

Mr Cook says Victoria Police, which has yet to conclude its fourth investigation into the corruption claims, "continues to fail" him and his staff.

Three separate investigations by Casey, Greater Dandenong and Moorabbin CIU detectives had previously closed without any charges laid.

A leaked police brief in June 2020 recommended further investigation "to identify alleged corruption or misuse of office".

A State Parliamentary inquiry has twice examined the closure. It concluded that police were better placed to investigate alleged corruption.

Mr Cook's Supreme Court civil action against the Department of Health and Greater Dandenong remains afoot.

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