

Police to probe slug saga

Allegations evidence was cooked up

Matt Johnston, James Campbell and Mark Buttler

Police will be called in to probe a catering firm's allegations that evidence — including a rogue slug — was cooked up in order to shut it down earlier this year.

In February, iCook Foods was closed by the Department of Health after it was blamed for a listeria case in a nursing home.

Dandenong Council then inspected the facility where food was prepared and hit the company with 96 charges, all of which were sensationally withdrawn at court in October.

One of the charges was related to a slug being found on its premises, something the company said must have been planted.

It even hired a slug expert to cast doubt on the evidence, including the lack of trail around the pest and the conditions that were not suited to slugs.

Business owner Ian Cook has now revealed video footage showing the

circumstances around the slug's discovery, while questions have also been raised about a photo of the offending mollusc.

Dandenong Council said it "absolutely rejects the suggestion that the slug was planted".

Mr Cook, who is preparing to sue for \$26 million in damages over the scandal, has hired former fraud squad detectives to expose flaws in charges presented in court. A complaint is set to be handed to Victoria Police about potential perjury and falsification of evidence.

Greater Dandenong Council city planning, design and amenity director Jody Bosman said the council believed its allegations "were well-founded".

Ms Bosman said the charges were withdrawn because iCook Foods Pty Ltd and Ian Cook were contesting every aspect of what was alleged, which looked likely to result in the council incurring irrecoverable costs exceeding \$500,000.

Kitchen pursuit 'bullying'

Council turns on whistleblower

A health inspector who blew the whistle on the City of Greater Dandenong after it allegedly pressured her to fabricate evidence has been denied access to WorkCover.

Kim Rogerson helped to expose the council's pursuit of iCook Foods, which was facing 96 charges before they were withdrawn last month.

The company, which has sued for \$26 million over the saga, claims evidence including a slug was planted in its kitchen.

The pursuit of iCook Foods came after it was suspended by the Department of Health and Human Services in February when wrongly linked to a case of listeria.

Ms Rogerson said she was pressured to sign off on a report with inaccuracies and she couldn't watch the council hound iCook Foods over cooked-up evidence.

"They are just bullies," she said.

"I am absolutely disgusted about the behaviour, they went after iCook with such determination to shut them down."

She is heading to court to

**Matt Johnston and
James Campbell**

try to force council insurer MAV Care to approve WorkCover payments, saying she had been bullied and was not well enough to return to work.

Ms Rogerson also sent a complaint to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

Greater Dandenong director of city planning, design and amenity Jody Bosman said WorkCover claims were a matter for the Victorian WorkCover Authority's insurer.

"Council cannot comment further on any staffing matters," he said.

"On the broader issue, Greater Dandenong Council strongly refutes all allegations made, however we do take them extremely seriously."

Owner Ian Cook said the saga had killed his business, and Ms Rogerson was another victim.

"They (the council) want to discredit her, they need to discredit her," he said.