

Police probe golf promoter's charity cash

By CHRIS MIRAMS
and SIMON BEATTIE

Police are investigating the dealings of the promoter of what was to have been New Zealand's richest golf tournament in Lower Hutt next month.

Frank Burgess is promoter of the \$650,000 New Zealand Women's Golf Classic. It had attracted many of the game's leading players, but the event was stripped of its official status by European authorities just before Christmas and now appears dead in the water.



Frank Burgess

Top players, including world No 1 Australian Karrie Webb, have pulled out. Hutt Golf Club has halted course preparation.

Mr Burgess hasn't been heard of for weeks and is believed to be in the United States.

Detective Senior Sergeant Stephen Vaughan, head of Wellington police's CIB, confirmed yesterday a complaint had been laid relating to Mr Burgess.

"The file is being assessed with a view to seeing if it's a matter for police or one for the Serious Fraud Office. This relates to his involvement as a receiver of money from charity trusts." No more details were available as the officer in charge of the matter is on holiday.

Anxious sponsors are still trying to



WANTED - Holden wants to repossess this car, parked outside Frank Burgess' home. The car is part of its sponsorship deal. Picture: CRAIG SIMCOX

track Mr Burgess, with Holden New Zealand wanting to repossess a new car it gave him as part of its package.

The car is parked outside Mr Burgess' Hataitai home and a Holden spokesman said this week they wanted it back.

The golf tournament's collapse isn't Mr Burgess' first brush with money troubles.

Wellington-based sports collective Sports Services Ltd this week said Mr Burgess was its administrator in 1999 when "tens of thousands of dollars" of rent money went missing.

The company represented, and was made up of, a group of sports bodies that leased premises from Wellington City Council in the library complex.

Sports Services director Roger Wood said Mr Burgess' duties included the ordering of supplies and handling lease arrangements.

In August 1999 his resignation was accepted after three rent payments to the council were not made and money was unaccounted for.

The groups were also unhappy with the whereabouts of some grants from the New Zealand Community Trust.

Council spokeswoman Trina Saffioti has confirmed that as of December 4 last year Sports Services owed it \$22,000 in unpaid rent.

The parties have now resolved the issue.

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