

A lot of crimes are just hoaxes

From our Sydney staff

SYDNEY, Sat. — Sydney detectives believe that many unsolved crimes listed in police records over recent months will never be solved—because they were never committed.

They believe these crimes have been invented by a rapidly increasing wave of hoaxers.

In the last few months, police have uncovered more than a dozen hoaxes, ranging from the reported drowning of a three-year-old boy in the harbour to a criminal assault on a young woman by an armed bandit.

Serious problem

Superintendent C. J. Delaney, chief of Sydney C.I.B., said yesterday that hoaxers, particularly women who claimed that men had assaulted them, were becoming a very serious problem for the Police Department.

Detectives were uncovering hoaxes at the rate of about one a fortnight. Many other reports of crimes were highly suspect.

One of the latest hoaxes uncovered by Sydney police was an alleged assault in which two sailors "kicked a 15-year-old boy unconscious and robbed him."

After intensive questioning by detectives the youth admitted that he had lost his week's pay, and had fabricated the assault and robbery story to conceal his loss.

Harbour search

Last month water police spent hours searching the harbour after a man had told them a wharf crowd had pushed his three-year-old son into the water.

Later he admitted that he had been trying to get accommodation in the city and had made up the story to get publicity.

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Another man, who was found gagged and tied spreadeagled to the corner-posts of his bed, told police thugs had tied him up and robbed him of £130.

Under questioning he said he had fabricated the story in an effort to bring about a reconciliation with his wife.

A young man and a young woman came to the police with a lurid story of an armed man who held them up at gun point and raped the girl. The young couple's story proved to be an at-

tempt to explain away their late return home.

One of the youngest hoaxers—a nine-year-old boy—sent police on a 24-hour search for a man who had allegedly lured him into a cave and assaulted him.

Grave danger

The reason for the boy's story was that he wished to divert attention from the fact that he had spent a shilling which did not belong to him.

Superintendent Delaney said yesterday that there was a grave danger that a hoaxer would persist with his story to the point of identifying an innocent person and have him arrested and even convicted for an imaginary crime.

Adult hoaxers can be prosecuted for causing a public mischief, but the only thing police can do with juveniles is to refer their conduct to the Child Welfare Department for any action considered necessary.