



Collaborating for change:

# Symposium Advancing Bushfire Arson Prevention in Australia

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 March, 2010

Monash Conference Centre, Level 7, 30 Collins St., Melbourne

A joint initiative of:



Australian Government  
Australian Institute of Criminology



Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science



MONASH University

Monash Sustainability Institute

## About the Symposium

*Each year, thousands of bushfires are deliberately lit around Australia, causing significant damage to human life, communities, ecosystems and the economy. This symposium is bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders to set out priorities and plans for advancing the knowledge and understanding of bushfire arson prevention in Australia.*

Through big-picture plenary presentations and topic-specific workshop sessions, participants will actively examine current bushfire arson prevention approaches, identify gaps in our current knowledge and practice, and develop plans for addressing them.

### Symposium Objectives

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The aim of the symposium is to advance the information required for better legal and policy decisions relating to the management of bushfire arson in Australia. This will be done by:

- Identifying the best practice arson prevention models operating in Australia and internationally
- Identifying the gaps and priorities for improving current knowledge and responses, and drawing plans for addressing them
- Bringing together those working in the bushfire arson prevention field across organisations and disciplines to meet, network and establish working relationships
- Producing a report that summarises the outcomes of the symposium, including current knowledge and gaps, to inform the implementation of the National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia and other bushfire arson prevention initiatives

### Themes

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The plenary presentations and the workshops are designed to examine bushfire arson prevention from several different perspectives:

- Identifying, managing and treating people at risk of committing bushfire arson
- Identifying communities with high arson potential and improving their resilience
- Improving multi-agency cooperation for better deterrence, capture and conviction rates of bushfire arsonists
- Developing an integrated approach to bushfire arson prevention

### Organising Committee

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The symposium is a joint initiative of the Australian Bushfire Arson Prevention Initiative (a collaboration of the Monash Sustainability Institute, the Monash Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, and Bond University), and the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The organising committee is:

- Dr Rebekah Doley (Bond University)
- Mr Warwick Jones (Australian Institute of Criminology)
- Dr Tahl Kestin (Monash Sustainability Institute)
- Mr Simon Rowntree (Monash Sustainability Institute)
- Dr Troy McEwan (Monash Centre for Forensic Behavioural Sciences)
- Dr Janet Stanley (Monash Sustainability Institute)

# Symposium Program

## Room Guide

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All plenary sessions will be in Seminar Rooms 2&3 on Level 7

Lunch and morning and afternoon tea will be in the Board Room on Level 7

SR1 = Seminar Room 1, Level 7

SR2 = Seminar Room 2, Level 7

SR3 = Seminar Room 3, Level 7

CB11 = Collins St Board Room, Level 11

## Day 1: Thursday, 25 March 2010

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<b>8:30–9:15</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
<b>9:15–11:15</b>	<b>OPENING PLENARY AND KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS</b>
<b>9:15–9:30</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
<b>9:30–10:00</b>	<b>Opening address: The National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia</b> <i>The Hon. Robert McClelland, MP (Attorney-General for Australia)</i>
<b>10:00–10:30</b>	<b>An overview of bushfire arson in Australia</b> <i>Dr Adam Tomison (Australian Institute of Criminology)</i>
<b>10:30–11:00</b>	<b>The psychology of bushfire arsonists</b> <i>Prof. James Ogloff (Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University)</i>
<b>11:00–11:15</b>	<b>Notification of workshop arrangements</b>
<b>11:15–11:30</b>	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
<b>11:30–13:00</b>	<b>CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS</b>
	<b>SR1 The motivation for bushfire arson</b> <i>Dr Troy McEwan (Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University)</i> & <i>Dr Damon Muller (Australian National University)</i>
	<b>SR2 Improving multi-agency approaches to arson prevention</b> <i>Chris Lewis (NSW Fire Brigades)</i>
	<b>SR3 Assessing human, economic and environmental risks of bushfire arson</b> <i>Prof. John McAneney (Risk Frontiers) &amp; Prof. Nigel Tapper (Monash University)</i>
<b>13:00–13:45</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>13:45–15:15</b>	<b>CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS</b>
	<b>SR1 Juvenile arson: Early prevention and intervention</b> <i>Prof. Mairead Dolan (Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University)</i> & <i>Dr Janet Stanley (Monash Sustainability Institute)</i>
	<b>SR2 Improving the knowledge base for bushfire arson</b> <i>Amy Gledden (Victoria Police) &amp; Warwick Jones (Australian Institute of Criminology)</i>
	<b>SR3 The media and bushfire arson</b> <i>Dr Phil Chubb (Monash University) &amp; Peter Sprott (Crime Stoppers)</i>
<b>15:15–15:30</b>	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>
<b>15:30–17:00</b>	<b>CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS</b>
	<b>SR1 Treatment and intervention with juvenile firesetters</b> <i>Penny Wolf (Country Fire Authority) &amp; Kate McDonald (Victoria University)</i>
	<b>SR2 The evolving legislative response to bushfire arson</b> <i>Dr John Anderson (Newcastle University) &amp; Dr Gaye Landsell (Monash University)</i>
	<b>SR3 The impact of bushfire arson on insurance</b> <i>Laurie Ratz (Insurance Council of Australia) &amp; Phil James (RACV Insurance)</i>
<b>17:00</b>	<b>CLOSE</b>
<b>17:15–18:30</b>	<b>INFORMAL DRINKS</b>

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## Day 2: Friday, 26 March 2010

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<b>8:30–9:10</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
<b>9:10–11:00</b>	<b>PLENARY KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS</b>
9:10–9:15	Welcome
9:15–9:45	<b>Environmental criminology and the potential for reducing opportunities for bushfire arson</b> <i>Dr Paul Cozens (Curtin University of Technology)</i>
9:45–10:15	<b>What fire services around Australia are doing to reduce bushfire arson</b> <i>Gwynne Brennan (Country Fire Authority)</i>
10:15–10:35	<b>Distinguishing arson fires</b> <i>Richard Woods (ACT Rural Fire Service)</i>
10:35–10:50	Notification of workshop arrangements
<b>10:50–11:15</b>	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
<b>11:15–12:45</b>	<b>CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS</b>
SR1	<b>Recognising individuals at risk of committing arson</b> <i>Dr Kate Fritzton (Bond University) &amp; Dr Rebekah Doley (Bond University)</i>
SR2	<b>Effective arson detection and investigation</b> <i>Richard Woods (ACT Rural Fire Service) &amp; Paul Hollowood (Victoria Police)</i>
SR3	<b>What factors affect a community's arson potential?</b> <i>Dr Rebecca Wickes (The University of Queensland)</i> & <i>Jonathon Corcoran (The University of Queensland)</i>
CB11	<b>Bushfire arson and the courts</b> <i>Mark Woods (Tyler Tipping and Woods) &amp; Dr Michael King (Law Faculty, Monash University)</i>
<b>12:45–13:30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>13:30–15:00</b>	<b>CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS</b>
SR1	<b>Treatment and intervention with adult offenders</b> <i>Dr Kate Fritzton (Bond University)</i> & <i>Dr Troy McEwan (Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University)</i>
SR2	<b>Tracking individuals at risk of committing serial arson</b> <i>Dennis Mulroney (SA Police) &amp; Julie Williams (SA Police)</i>
SR3	<b>Assessing the space-time dynamics of ignition risk</b> <i>Dr Jonathan Corcoran (The University of Queensland)</i> & <i>Warwick Jones (Australian Institute of Criminology)</i>
CB11	<b>Urban &amp; environmental planning for reducing the risk of arson</b> <i>Dr Paul Cozens (Curtin University of Technology)</i> & <i>Warren Christensen (Qld Department of Environment and Resource Management)</i>
<b>15:00–15:15</b>	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>
<b>15:15–17:00</b>	<b>CLOSING PLENARY</b>
15:15–16:00	Workshop report-back
16:00–16:45	Panel discussion <i>Naomi Brown (Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council)</i> <i>Prof. John McAneney (Risk Frontiers)</i> <i>Prof. Jim Oglhoff (Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University)</i> <i>Richard Woods (ACT Rural Fire Service)</i>
16:45–17:00	Next steps
<b>17:00</b>	<b>CLOSE</b>

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## Workshop Descriptions

*The aim of the workshops is to examine the state of knowledge and practice related to a particular aspect of bushfire arson prevention, identify gaps, and recommend how they should be addressed. Most workshops will have approximately 20–30 min of background presentations on the topic by the workshop leaders and one hour of discussion.*

**Thu, 25 March 2010, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm**

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### **The motivation for bushfire arson**

**Dr Troy McEwan** (*Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University*) & **Dr Damon Muller** (*Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University*)

This session will seek to explore why bushfire arson occurs, and what the implications of that are. Whilst there is a body of literature that explores the motivation of structural arsonists, it is likely that at least some bushfire arsonists are motivated by different reasons to structural arsonists. Apart from Willis's (2004) proposed typology of bushfire arsonists, there has been little consideration of the motivations of bushfire arsonists, and less research. It is important also to ask why we are interested in the motivations of arsonists. It is likely that the motivational typologies that are of interest to clinicians treating arsonists may not be the same as those of police and fire agencies investigating their fires.

### **Improving multi-agency approaches to arson prevention**

**Chris Lewis** (*NSW Fire Brigades*)

This workshop looks at agencies can work together proactively to prevent bushfire arson from happening. Although the primary focus of the proactive response is on police and fire agencies, examples of the involvement of other agencies such as in the case of the Hunter Arson Reduction Taskforce will be discussed. The workshop will not only highlight successful examples of multi agency responses but will also include a frank discussion of some of the questions such as, why is so difficult to sustain a proactive response, how can we lower the transaction costs of these initiatives, how big a problem is incompatible data bases and what are the best governance structures to make a proactive response effective and enduring.

### **Assessing human, economic and environmental risks of bushfire arson**

**Prof. John McAneney** (*Risk Frontiers, Macquarie University*) & **Prof. Nigel Tapper** (*School of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University*)

Prof. McAneney will talk about the cost of bushfire risks in relation to property losses and fatalities. His presentation will cover: (1) Re-evaluation of the history of building damage and loss of life due to bushfire in Australia since 1925 in light of the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria. (2) A brief description of the modelling of catastrophe insurance costs in respect of bushfire risk as a function of Annual Return Interval. (3) Examination of patterns of home destruction in recent and historic fires to illustrate the critical importance on building vulnerability with distance from bushland. Prof. Tapper will discuss some of the environmental impacts of bushfires, concentrating especially on recent work in the Monash Climate Program on surface-atmosphere interactions.

**Thu, 25 March 2010, 1:45 – 3:15 pm**

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### **Juvenile arson: Early prevention and intervention**

**Prof. Mairead Dolan** (*Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University*) & **Dr Janet Stanley** (*Monash Sustainability Institute, Monash University*)

This session will look at how to prevent juveniles lighting fires. The workshop will give an overview of juvenile fire-lighting behaviour. Attention will be given to psychosocial factors such as deficits in emotional function, dysfunctional family environment, and significant life stressors which can lead to inappropriate unsupervised fireplay and eventually pathologic firesetting. The workshop will concentrate on how to prevent this behaviour occurring and what early intervention is needed, particularly in relation to the problem of the neglect and abuse in childhood which is often a precursor to pathological behaviour such as firelighting.

## Improving the knowledge base for bushfire arson

**Amy Gledden** (*Victoria Police*) & **Warwick Jones** (*Australian Institute of Criminology*)

Effective data and knowledge management systems underpin bushfire arson prevention strategies. The purpose of this workshop is to assess the current state of our systems and to plot the research requirements in the area. The workshop will be introduced by a review of the principle and practice of current systems based on a recent data collection from 18 fire agencies. The police perspective will be introduced by a discussion of operational examples of bushfire arson in the data systems of Victoria Police.

## The media and bushfire arson

**Dr Phil Chubb** (*Department of Journalism, Monash University*) & **Peter Sprott** (*Crime Stoppers*)

This session will cover differing aspects of the role of the media in preventing and detecting bushfire arson. Their workshop will include topics such as whether the media should attempt to 'profile' potential arsonists to alert rural communities to their characteristics; whether the publicity given to arsonists encourages others and whether the demands of the media for 'sexy' stories sometimes means that they are not as helpful in investigations as they could be.

**Thu, 25 March 2010, 3:30 – 5:00 pm**

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## Treatment and intervention with juvenile firesetters

**Penny Wolf** (*Country Fire Authority*) & **Kate McDonald** (*Victoria University*)

Juvenile firesetting is a community problem, not just a fire service problem. Accurate prevalence data on juvenile firesetting in Australia is unclear; however some researchers have estimated that about 20% of deliberately lit fires are attributed to juveniles. Many juvenile firesetters have associated mental health, emotional, behavioural, familial or social issues. There is some evidence to suggest that childhood interest in fire may predict adult involvement in fire. Firesetting is also thought to be a marker for future crime. Most current 'treatment' of such young people relies on fire safety education delivered by the fire service as the sole intervention. However, recent research has highlighted limitations of this approach and best practice endorses a multidisciplinary approach where fire services and mental health services work together and collaborate with other

relevant agencies. This workshop will provide an overview of current Australian and international research. It will cover the prevalence and characteristics of juvenile fire setting, predictors of recidivism and analysis of best practice multidisciplinary treatment models.

## The evolving legislative response to bushfire arson

**Dr John Anderson** (*Newcastle Law School, University of Newcastle*) & **Associate Professor Dr Gaye Lansdell** (*Law Faculty, Monash University*)

Issues to be considered in this workshop include the need for a national co-ordinated legislative approach to arson and bushfire offences, formulation of the mental element in such offences and the creation of strict liability offences, evidentiary problems in proof of these offences, offence labelling - indictable and summary offences, and the maximum penalties and sentencing options for arson and bushfire offences. In addition, the international legislative and government policy with respect to bushfire arson will also be discussed with emphasis on models adopted in selected south Mediterranean countries and North America – jurisdictions also affected by bushfires/wildfires seasonally. This international focus will extend to arson pre-court diversion programs and post conviction strategies.

## The impact of bushfire arson on insurance

**Laurie Ratz** (*Insurance Council of Australia*) & **Phil James** (*RACV Insurance*)

Arson and in particular Bushfire related arson cost the general insurance industry millions of dollars each year. The total cost of the Victorian Bushfires of January and February 2009 was approximately \$1.2B. The insurance industry works closely with law enforcement and other government agencies to assist where possible to prevent and detect the perpetrators of arson and bushfire related arson. This workshop intends to explore the most effective ways for the general insurance industry to deal with bushfire arson and how the crime impacts upon insurers and in turn the consumer. It is also necessary to understand the various types of insurance products available to the consumer and the impacts of non-insurance and under-insurance. Preventative measures currently employed by the insurance industry include the Arson Reward Scheme and an industry working group known as the Economic Crime Insurance Working Group.

**Fri, 26 March 2010, 11:15 am – 12:45 pm**

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### **Recognising individuals at risk of committing arson**

**Dr Kate Fritzon** (*Bond University*) & **Dr Rebekah Doley** (*Bond University*)

Deliberate firesetting remains a significant concern to our community with devastating effects recorded from fires annually. In the wake of the Victorian bushfires experienced in 2009 efforts to better manage this national concern have been mobilised at policy, practitioner and operational levels. This paper will present the results of a preliminary review into current best practice for risk assessment of arson offenders. In Australia, currently there is no consistent approach to the assessment and intervention of adult arsonists. Reference to advances in the international arena will be made and the applicability of the lessons learned overseas to the domestic context will be examined. Suggestions for best practice risk assessment for this population will be presented based on the evidence available currently.

### **Effective arson detection and investigation**

**Richard Woods** (*ACT Rural Fire Service*) & **Paul Hollowood** (*Victoria Police*)

The investigation of the cause of bushfires is a shared responsibility in Australia between the Fire and Police Services. However, often their roles are not closely linked (the Fire Service extinguishes the fire and determines the cause; the Police Service investigate who is responsible). More recently, opportunities have arisen to more closely integrate Fire Service and Police Service fire investigation specialists, providing a greater level of correlation of investigation intelligence. This session will review the arrangements that typically apply between the Fire and Police Services and explore options to more successfully investigate the problem of bushfire arson.

### **What factors affect a community's arson potential?**

**Dr Rebecca Wickes** (*The Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland*) & **Dr Jonathon Corcoran** (*School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management, University of Queensland*)

This workshop will focus on recent criminological contributions from the Project of Human Development in Chicago Neighbourhoods and

consider their applicability to understanding the spatial dynamics of crime and disorder in Australia. We then assess the utility of such theories in explaining fire related incidents. Drawing on data from a survey of residents across 82 Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) in S.E. Queensland, census data, police incident reports and fire incident data from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, we employ spatial and regression techniques to examine the key spatial, socio-structural and regulatory characteristics of SLAs that lead to higher rates of malicious hoax calls for fire service.

### **Bushfire arson and the courts**

**Mark Woods** (*Tyler Tipping and Woods*) & **Dr Michael King** (*Law Faculty, Monash University*)

Arson and in particular bushfire arson is one of the more serious offences to be dealt with by the courts. This workshop considers the response of the courts to arson. It considers the nature of the trial and sentencing process; sentencing alternatives and sentencing trends; the weight to be attached to sentencing factors such as deterrence, protection of the community and rehabilitation; whether the views and experiences of victims can and should be communicated better in the court process; whether alternative sentencing measures – such as restorative justice – should be used along with or instead of current sentences; and the role of community expectations in the court process.

**Fri, 26 March 2010, 1:30 – 3:00 pm**

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### **Treatment and intervention with adult offenders**

**Dr Kate Fritzon** (*Bond University*) & **Dr Troy McEwan** (*Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Monash University*)

This session will explore options for the treatment and rehabilitation of fire-setters. Dr Fritzon will review the literature on the clinical treatment of fire-setting, examine evaluation and outcome data, and discuss models for integrating assessment and treatment. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their own experiences of working with fire-setters, and approaches they have found useful or believe need further investigation. Methods of assessment to guide treatment, targets of treatment and intervention, and framing future assessment and treatment within the Risk, Needs, Responsivity model will be included.

## Tracking individuals at risk of committing serial arson

**Dennis Mulroney** (SA Police) & **Julie Williams** (SA Police)

This session will present a brief overview of the Operation Nomad, the South Australia Police state-wide bushfire prevention initiative. This initiative involves a targeted policing response to the declaration of fire bans and engages multiple agencies in working together to provide information about persons who may have a tendency for lighting bushfires. This information is then provided to the police intelligence areas and profiles are developed for those selected for dedicated police attention during the fire danger season. The processes for selecting 'Persons of Interest' (POIs) to be subjected to this attention will be discussed. The development of these processes has identified some issues for further discussion and research such as; how to identify POIs, developing a suitable matrix for ranking POIs, controlled processes for monitoring POI activity (and some of the consequences of monitoring), identifying why they do it and issues police face when interviewing/debriefing suspected arsonists. Other questions to be addressed include: Is anybody else doing this? Can we link together in this activity? Can we focus some research on policing needs in this area?

## Assessing the space-time dynamics of ignition risk

**Warwick Jones** (Australian Institute of Criminology) & **Dr Jonathon Corcoran** (The University of Queensland)

This workshop addresses the problem of how we can take advantage of the patterned nature of bushfire arson to better forecast its occurrence and understand some of its underlying dynamics. Some of the major principles of a geographic approach to bushfire arson will be discussed and examples of the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to better understand bushfire arson will be presented.

## Urban & environmental planning for reducing the risk of arson

**Dr Paul Cozens** (Curtin University of Technology) & **Warren Christensen** (Qld Department of Environment and Resource Management)

This workshop will canvas participant's views to determine the information required to make informed planning decisions to help ensure that people and property are afforded the best chances of surviving wildfires. Ultimately it will seek to ask the question: Are there some places that people should not live (or be allowed to live)? Discussions will cover such areas as: Can situational crime prevention methods play a role protecting against bushfire arson? Can we develop "fire zoning" maps that inform development and building standards? How would this impact on planning decisions? What agencies should be involved in the decision-making? What conflicts of interest would such an approach create and how could these be resolved?

