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## **Tougher New Legislation for Arsonists**

Dr Mike Nahan, the Member for Riverton said arsonists could face up to life imprisonment under sweeping new laws to be introduced in State Parliament by the Liberal-National Government.

Dr Nahan said the laws, which are expected to be passed before summer, would ensure arson was treated as one of the most serious criminal offences in Western Australia.

"The State Government has worked hard to develop laws that target, and appropriately penalise all possible arson-related offences," said Dr Nahan.

"Our legislation will significantly increase penalties and ensure the laws of this State recognise the inherent danger that arsonists cause."

Dr Nahan, who has raised concerns in Parliament about WA's prescribed burning targets following the tragic loss of life and property in the fire disaster in Victoria earlier this year, said the legislation would increase the maximum jail-term for lighting a fire where it is likely that damage would be done to persons or property from 14 years to 20 years.

"Arson is a heinous crime and that is why the proposed legislation will increase the maximum penalty from 14 years to life imprisonment for acts of arson where a person willfully destroys or damages property by fire," said Dr Nahan.

Dr Nahan also warned would-be offenders that the new legislation clearly defined the term 'property' to include vegetation.

"This means that if a person willfully lights a fire that damages any sort of property, including bush, vegetation or grassland, they will be sentenced under the new laws," Dr Nahan said.

"The new legislation will also create an entirely new offence, which makes it clear that if a person does not take reasonable care when in control of a fire or ignition source and someone is injured or killed as a result, the offender will be held to account."

"I am pleased to see that these laws will ensure arson is treated as one of the most serious criminal offences in Western Australia, and will ensure that the laws of this State recognise the inherent danger arsonists cause."

Dr Nahan recommended that if members of the public see anyone lighting a fire to note the details and urgently report it to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or if it is an emergency and requires police or fire brigade attendance, to immediately call 000.

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