

## Cracker crackdown a fizzer

By John Mitchell

Telopea Park residents are disappointed that, despite assurances that the ACT Government would finally put an end to the unauthorised use of fireworks in the park during Greek Orthodox Easter celebrations, the show went on, unimpeded.

Responding to a query from Member for Kurrajong Elizabeth Lee five weeks before the event, Minister for Workplace Safety Rachel Stephen-Smith said, "Last year, ACT Policing monitored the Greek Orthodox Easter celebrations and activities in Telopea Park, and WorkSafe was on call in the event of any incidents. Unfortunately, even when the area is actively patrolled by ACT Policing, it has proven difficult to detect and prevent the unlawful use of fireworks, and it has not been possible to identify those responsible.

"I was disappointed to hear that, despite WorkSafe and ACT Policing's efforts, fireworks were again used unlawfully in Telopea Park during Orthodox Easter in 2018. As a result, I asked WorkSafe ACT to

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**“.difficult to detect and prevent the unlawful use of fireworks, and to identify those responsible.”**

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increase its engagement with the community and to coordinate efforts with ACT Policing and other relevant agencies to attempt to prevent this disturbance in 2019 and to raise community awareness about the potential for explosions to be heard despite these prevention efforts."

Minister Stephen-Smith continued, "WorkSafe officials have consulted with the Greek Orthodox Church in order to confirm that fireworks will not be used at the event by the Church. I am assured.. that the Church does not condone the use of fireworks or explosives in Telopea Park.

"Access Canberra has also proactively consulted the Kingston and Barton Residents Group and ACT Policing.. [and] also engaged with Domestic Animal Services regarding the potential impact of unexpected explosions on the wellbeing of pets in the local area..

"Additionally, police from Woden Police Station and Traffic Operations will conduct high visibility patrols in the area as operational priorities allow," Minister Stephen-Smith concluded.

As in previous years, the crackers started going off at midnight. Access Canberra inspectors had taken up positions in the park earlier in the evening said they had no power to act. Several residents phoned the police and they were on the scene within minutes. They got out of their car and chatted together and then, when the show finished at 12.30, they left, without taking any action. 