

Arson-hit club asks for help

By Emma Tyner and Will Wright

A JUNIOR football club that lost all its equipment in an arson attack is appealing for community support.

CFA crews were called to Dobson Park in Ferntree Gully just before midnight on Monday last week after a fire from a bin spread to a Knox Council-owned storage room and scoreboard.

Upper Ferntree Gully Junior Football Club lost \$50,000 of equipment but was insured for only \$15,000.

President Ray Willis said the fire had hit the club hard.

"All our training equipment and match equipment is totally destroyed.

"We are underinsured and have a massive job in front of us. Our No. 1 objective is to let people know we are in trouble."

The club, which has spent years raising money to buy equipment including punching bags, balls and a treadmill, will use the insurance to buy "bare necessities".

"Fifteen thousand won't go far," Willis said.

"We will be buying things we really need.

"It's all the extra things we spent years accumulating that we won't be able to replace."

The club has more than 200 junior players and another 100 Auskick members.

It will hold a raffle and sausage sizzles to raise money to replace equipment.

"Over the next six to 12 months we will be asking the community to help out," Willis said.

Ferntree Gully MP Nick Wakeling said



Destroyed: Inside the Upper Ferntree Gully Junior Football Club storage room which was hit by fire. **Picture: Joseph Sirucka**

he had approached Sports Minister James Merlino about emergency funding for the club.

"Whoever has done this terrible crime should hang their heads in shame and I hope they are brought to justice quickly.

"I call upon our local community

to get behind Upper Gully and help them get back on their feet."

Detective Senior Constable Rick Rottinger, of the Knox crime investigation unit, said police interviewed four young males about the fire, but had made no arrests and would continue investigations.

"Not only is it devastating to small sporting clubs and community groups, it could have been dangerous to the people who lit the fire as well as people who attended it.

"It's a pretty senseless act and obviously those who are caught doing it will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

Information to Knox CIU on 9837 7999 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. To offer support to the club, call 0412 711 594.

Skaters' campaign a success

SKATERS were anticipating a victory last night in their battle to keep the Knox Bowl.

Councillors were expected to approve recommendations that the popular skate park be retained for two years, pending a review of the Wantima South site in Lewis Park.

The skate park would continue to be maintained at an annual cost of between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

Rehabilitation works required to ensure ongoing safety and usability were estimated at \$25,000 and would be carried out in the next two years on a "needs basis".

Save Knox Bowl group leader David Lalama said the recommendation was a "very positive one that has obviously been given significant thought".

"It illustrates that the council has not only listened to our concerns and taken the time to review their original decision, but also considered the possible future of the facility.

"I sincerely thank Mayor Jim Penna for allowing us to utilise the council's democratic process and being supportive of our events throughout the campaign.

"I would also like to express my gratitude to Cr Adam Gill for highlighting the issue to the council and being influential in having our, the community's voice, heard."

The *Journal* spoke to Cr Penna before last night's meeting, but he refused to pre-empt the councillors' decision.

"The council has had a policy in place for some years to have one regional skate park."

He said Knoxfield's Gilbert Park bowl was intended to replace the old skate park. "Obviously council officers have foreshadowed some adjustment to that [policy]."

Aston MP Chris Pearce congratulated the community for achieving a fantastic result.

"This is one of those rare occasions in which Knox City Council has listened to residents."

Mums urged to have say on suburbs

MOTHERS are getting the conversation started about their experiences living in Bayswater and Bayswater North.

The Mothers Living Well project needs mums interested in sharing their story or to interview other mothers and take notes for the initiative.

The discussions focus on mothers' experiences, what they like and their ideas to improve the suburbs.

Bayswater resident Diana Hicks, who has

'We'd love to involve mothers of different ages, cultures, those who are new to the area, who have lived here for years'

Catherine D'Arcy

been interviewing mothers for the project, said it provided her with a great opportunity.

"I can have a say on the things I am passionate about in this community. I really feel that mothers have a lot to share and we sometimes forget that."

Mrs Hicks said the project provided mothers with a chance to put their ideas forward, "knowing we can make a difference".

Catherine D'Arcy, of the Knox Community Health Service, which co-ordinates the program, said mothers of all backgrounds were welcome.



Mothers connecting: Diana Hicks, right, interviews Ana Novaceanu with her son Luca, 16 months. **Picture: Rob Carew**

"We'd love to involve mothers of different ages, cultures, those who are new to the area, who have lived here for years, those with young and older children and whose children have grown up and left.

"We are also keen to involve mums who care for children with additional needs or for

adults with a disability connected to Bayswater or Bayswater North."

Ms D'Arcy said mums interested in talking to other mothers would be provided with support and the project would help them gain recognition for future study or work.

"The information from these interviews will

be put towards action plans over the next few years to make the area an even better place for mums and their families."

Details: Catherine D'Arcy on 9757 6261 (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) or catherine.darcy@kchs.org.au

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