

Eight die in house fi

By MICHELLE POUNTNEY and AAP

FIRE authorities and police are investigating the deaths of six children and two adults in a weekend of tragic fires.

Three died in a Brisbane blaze after being trapped by a security grille on a window.

Their mother, who managed to rescue the nanny's baby son, could only watch helplessly as the house was engulfed in flames.

Last night a Queensland Fire Brigade spokesman said there were no smoke detectors in the house and security grilles barred the front door and most windows.

There had been three adults and seven children in the house. Those who escaped fled through the back door.

The bodies of four-year-old twins Benjamin and Jade Kreiger and their 10-year-old sister, Belinda, were found crouched under the window in a back bedroom.

Jean Ruy, 10, was in Royal Brisbane Hospital with third-degree burns to 90 per cent of her body.

She was rescued by her father, Gerry Ruy, who owned the house. He also saved his son, Jason, 7.

Meanwhile, a three-year-old child died when a house in Lithgow, west of Sydney, caught fire yesterday, a fire brigade spokesman said.

Seven other children and two adults managed to escape the blaze that gutted the house.

The fire brigade was called to the Landa St home just after 8am and the body of the child was found about 20 minutes later.

The spokesman said the blaze was being treated as suspicious.

In Victoria, the neighbor of two children killed in a house fire with their parents in Mooroolbark has rejected suggestions their deaths were a murder-suicide.

The Williams family — Douglas, 40, Carol, 35, Fabian 8, and Jessica, 6 — died when their Lancaster Rd house caught fire about 2am Saturday.

Arson squad detective Sgt Brad Lancaster said on Saturday there were



Tragic twin: Jade Kreiger died with her twin brother.

Trapped: Benjamin Kreiger was trapped.



Fabian Williams

indications fuel was used to start the fire in the front lounge room of the house.

"We are looking at the possibility of a murder-suicide," he said.

Next-door neighbor Armando Cassai, 64, said

Fabian and Jessica were like grandchildren to him and came to see him most days after school.

A tearful Mr Cassai said the family, who had lived in the street for about eight years, were very close and did everything together.

"I don't believe that it could have been murder-suicide," he said.

"I know them. I don't believe they could harm the two kids.

"If something goes wrong with them (parents) fair enough, anything's possible. I don't believe for any time they

could harm the children."

Mr Cassai said the children were only allowed to visit his house on their own. He said he would miss the children terribly.

"She (Jessica) was always jumping on me. She loved to be cuddled. I had to tell her to stop jumping on me, 'you're too heavy'. Then she would search my pockets for butter menthols."

Mr and Mrs Williams' other son, David, 18, moved out of home in March.

Police told him about the tragedy on Saturday

morning. He is now being comforted by family members.

Mr Williams and the children were regular worshippers at nearby St Francis in the Field church.

A church representative said Mrs Williams did not attend and refused to comment further.

Several people left small floral tributes to the family in the front garden behind fire brigade tape.

The arson squad yesterday would not comment on the progress of the investigation.

'Deathtrap' warning from Morwell CFA

THE Country Fire Authority (CFA) has warned local residents to take precautions when their homes are fitted with deadlocks, warning a deadlocked home could be a "death trap" in time of fire.

Fire officer Ross Sullivan, of Morwell Fire Station, said people should take precautions when their homes are fitted with deadlocks on doors and where there are shutters on the windows.

"Fire fighters have found people trapped behind these secured doors and windows when attending house fires," Mr Sullivan said.

"Often older people become confused during a fire and cannot find the key to their deadlocks.

"The CFA's advice is to always keep the key in the deadlock while at home and remove it only when absent from the property."

According to the CFA, there have been instances where people unable to find their deadlock key have attempted to escape a fire through a window, only to be trapped by the shutter.

"Firefighters too have been prevented from getting into burning houses because homes have been fitted with permanent window bars," Mr Sullivan said.

"They have had to use bolt cutters to lever the bars from the window."

The CFA suggests shutters be kept partly open while people are at home and only fully closed if they are away from the property.

When buying window bars, the CFA suggests people should make certain that they buy a brand with a lock and that the keys are kept in the bar's lock while residents are at home.

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Deadlocks can be a fire trap: brigade

pg. 9 Age 9/12/93

By TIM PEGLER

People living alone were placing their lives at risk by deadlocking their doors while they were inside, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade said yesterday.

It said deadlocked doors and the absence of smoke detectors were an all-too-frequent, fatal combination, after Brenda Joan McKenna, 58, died during a blaze at her North Balwyn home.

Ms McKenna's body was found at the front door of her house. The door was deadlocked, as was the wire security door.

A fire investigation unit station officer, Mr Phil Harris, said recent publicity over elderly people being attacked in their homes had resulted in a high level of concern over personal safety.

Mr Harris urged people living alone not to lock their deadlocks in case they need a quick exit in the event of fire or attack.

"Deadlocks are great when you're not at home and need to stop the thieves from getting out

the door," he said. "You are putting your life at risk by deadlocking doors when you are at home. You are effectively putting yourself in a cell. If you must deadlock the door leave the key in it."

Mr Harris said the North Balwyn fire was the second in recent months in which a single woman had locked herself in her home.

Heather Baillie, 35, died at her deadlocked Surrey Hills flat on 19 August this year.

On 11 November 1990, an 80-year-old woman died in her deadlocked flat at Malvern.

Inspector Tony Murphy, of the brigade's fire prevention department, said the fires at Ms McKenna's and Ms Baillie's homes were both started by discarded ashes from cigarettes.

"For peace of mind and security, buy a smoke detector and have it installed," he said.

Mr Harris said firemen entered Ms Baillie's flat through a window but could not get her out because the doors were deadlocked.

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Fire deaths 'tragic accident'

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A HOUSE fire which killed a young woman and her son overnight was probably a tragic accident compounded by the home's Fort Knox-like security and lack of fire alarms, police said.

The blaze in suburban Craigie claimed the lives of a 26-year-old woman and her 10-year-old son, and injured her defacto husband and his six-year-old son.

The house fire was detected about 12.45 am WST today by neighbours who tried to rouse the four occupants.

But they could not get past security devices protecting the home, a police arson detective said.

"They've attempted to gain entry but unfortunately there are security grills all around the premises and they couldn't gain entry," the officer told ABC radio.

"When the fire brigade attended they (too) had trouble getting in."

"It was like Fort Knox, there is no doubt about that, if they'd had a smoke alarm they would have had plenty of time to find the keys and get out, they wouldn't have had a problem."

It was just a tragic accident that the woman was pulled dead from the home, the officer said.

Her son died shortly afterwards in Joondalup hospital after resuscitation attempts failed.

Her defacto husband and his child remained in a stable condition at the hospital where they were receiving treatment for smoke inhalation.

The officer warned fire alarms were effective.

"So security is not really the issue, I think smoke alarms are the biggest issue," he told the ABC.