

News

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Suspended jail term for arson

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A FORMER volunteer firefighter has been given a suspended jail sentence for setting fire to the home of a man he disliked.

Ethan Scott Cooper, 22, of Glenorchy, pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated burglary and one count of arson.

The Supreme Court heard Cooper went to a Rosny unit complex, where his late grandmother used to live, early on February 22 last year.

Justice Shan Tennent said Cooper had long disliked the resident of the unit.

He broke in and started two fires with a cigarette lighter.

The Tasmania Fire Service was called and both fires were extinguished, but not before they had caused \$50,000 worth of damage.

When spoken to by police later the same day, Cooper denied any involvement in the fires or even being on the Eastern Shore that morning.

He continued to deny involvement in a second and third police interview – even after his father made a statement to police saying his son had confessed to him and the police produced mobile phone evidence showing he had been nearby.

At one point Cooper's mother tried to take responsibility for the fires, but he eventually admitted the truth at a fourth interview.

Justice Tennent said Cooper's actions were dangerous and had the potential to have caused damage to other units in the complex if the fires had spread.

"While I accept that you appear to have had personal struggles during your life, they do not excuse your behaviour," she said.

"Your actions had the potential to cause significant property damage and had the potential to endanger the lives of others in neighbouring units."

Justice Tennent sentenced him to 18 months in prison but suspended the execution of the sentence on the condition he not reoffend for three years.

