

suggestion anyone had asked proposed to Musgrove he start a fire and a psychiatric

Judge Kerry O'Brien sentenced Musgrove to five

to four counts of arson on various dates between July 5, 2001 and July 13, last year. The

could claim the insurance. Mr Nathan said there was no suggestion anyone had asked

house while she was away for the night at a party, and it damaged a bedroom.

Mr Nathan said the age bill for all the fire

Fraser tourists injured

THREE British backpackers were airlifted to Hervey Bay Hospital with serious injuries early yesterday morning after a four-wheel-drive vehicle rolled at Eastern Beach, on Fraser Island.

A 23-year-old Irish man will appear in Hervey Bay Magistrate's Court today charged with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle after the Toyota LandCruiser he was driving flipped on the beach and overturned.

The injured backpackers remain in Hervey Bay Hospital in stable conditions, but the driver and a fifth occupant, also from Ireland, both escaped unharmed.

Police said an Energex rescue helicopter was called to the scene around 11pm on Monday after being informed three of the five backpackers had sustained serious injuries.

The first backpacker flown to hospital was a 23-year-old English woman who suffered suspected neck and spinal injuries, as well as a severe laceration to the head.

The aircraft then returned to the island for a second English female backpacker, 30, who also sustained likely neck and spinal injuries.

The third backpacker, a 24-year-old Irish male, sustained abdominal injuries and broken ribs, but was unable to be transported to hospital until around 8am yesterday.

Energex rescue pilot Greg Skerrett said thick fog caused by fires near Bundaberg had made flying conditions "too difficult", and he was forced to ground the helicopter at Fraser Island about 2.30am.

— Mick Daly

Pensioner jailed for stabbing

A PENSIONER who stabbed a man during an argument may have created Queensland history when he was yesterday jailed for unlawful wounding.

A check of records failed to find anyone older than Eric James Howe, 77, who had been jailed for a violent crime in a higher Queensland court.

There are cases of people older than Howe being jailed but they involved child sex offences from up to 50 years ago.

The District Court in Brisbane was told Howe stabbed the man, 43, in the stomach with a steak knife after he had called him names.

Prosecutor April Freeman said Howe had been

Walkers welcome John aboard



HAVING a go ... Leanne Crofts and John Coutis are preparing for a fundraising walk to the Gold Coast. Picture: Bruce Long

Emma Chalmers

JOHN Coutis may have no legs, but that is not going to stop him joining a family walk from Ipswich, west of Brisbane, to the Gold Coast to raise money for people with disabilities.

The 33-year-old motivational speaker, who at 17 chose to have his legs amputated after he was born with a disability that rendered them useless, plans to push his modified skateboard beside his family for their seven-day walk in October.

He hopes the charity walk will raise \$100,000 to donate towards three causes of disabilities: amputees,

hydrocephalus (fluid on the brain — a condition that affects his son Clayton) and fibromyalgia, which causes severe muscular and skeletal pain and has struck down his mother-in-law.

Mr Coutis said the walk was to raise money and awareness.

"The money's going to help but we think that the awareness is going to be a lot better," he said. "Money can only do so many things but if we can raise the awareness of these conditions, we'll be so much better."

On October 9, Mr Coutis and his wife Leanne Crofts and Clayton, 10, will set off from the Ipswich Mall for the first of seven days of walking, a plan that

Ms Crofts said was hatched over a cup of coffee in Lismore six months ago.

"We're just an average family who's decided to do this to raise awareness and raise funds," she said.

"We've got a few more challenges in our family than most families and we've just decided to try."

Mr Coutis hoped friend and former Test cricket captain Steve Waugh would join them for the first two days of the walk and that the event would be inspiring for others, in line with his philosophy on life: "I think the No. 1 thing would really be get off your backside and have a go. No matter how bad you think you are, there's always someone worse off."

Grim fight for kids' health

Leanne Edmestone
HEALTH REPORTER

WHEN Ipswich mother Natalie Excell told friends that her daughter Kaitlin had Kawasaki Disease, they asked: "Like a motorcycle?"

Only one person knew Excell was referring to a common but serious illness that is one of the most common causes of heart disease in children.

It affects children such as Kaitlin, 6, who lives with an enlarged right coronary artery and spent six weeks in hospital when the illness struck her more than three years ago.

"She had a runny nose, a fever, was really grumpy, couldn't get out of bed and cried," Mrs Excell said.

"We had her to the GP times in 12 days and they kept saying it was a flu, a virus, the start of chicken pox."

"Eventually we were referred to paediatrician Dr James. He diagnosed it straight away and admitted her to hospital immediately. I asked one of the doctors if she could die, and when he said he couldn't answer that, my whole world crumbled."

She said although the risk of permanent heart damage had been explained, she and her husband Mathew did not think they could be that unlucky.

But Kaitlin did not respond to three times the normal treatment dose and only started to recover when given a massive dose of steroids.

Ultrasonounds and catheterisation showed her arteries were enlarged, although the left one has returned to normal.

Sm snip

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