

STATE OF TASMANIA v GEORGIA SKREPETOS
COMMENTS ON PASSING SENTENCE

24 MARCH 2021
PEARCE J

Georgia Skrepetos, you plead guilty to one count of unlawfully setting fire to property. Late in the evening of 16 October 2019 you drove your car to the home of Bilal Moutwari in West Moonah. There was a collection of rubbish in the entrance area to the house. You poured methylated spirits from a bottle you had just purchased from a service station into the pile and you set fire to it. Two of Mr Moutwari's adult sons were at home but he was not. One of the sons heard a bang and looked out to see the fire. He woke his brother and the fire service was called. You were quickly identified as the person responsible from CCTV footage and other police inquiries. You were interviewed but you denied any responsibility.

The photographs handed to me show that the house is a building almost of a commercial appearance and apparently of masonry construction. The fire was lit in an alcove at the front between the house and the footpath. An external door was damaged and the wall near the footpath was scorched. Otherwise, very fortunately, the main structure of the house was not set alight and was not seriously damaged. You were charged with arson but the State accepted your plea to the lesser charge because it accepted that you did not intend or foresee that the structure of the house would be damaged. However the risk of that happening would be obvious to almost anyone. If it had occurred, the prospect of damage to life and property would have been real.

You were 48 when this occurred. You are now aged 50. In 2008 you pleaded guilty to some dishonesty offences, for which you were put on a good behaviour bond. Apart from some traffic matters you had not been in any other trouble. In May 2020, since this crime, you were again required to give an undertaking to be of good behaviour. You approached Mr Moutwari when there were conditions of a family violence order and of your bail that you did not do so.

You are well educated. You have a good employment history. You have four children aged between 15 and 24 with whom you have frequent contact. None live with you. You separated from your husband in 2008 after which your life became difficult. There have been periods of transient accommodation. Things have recently become even more trying. You have been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis which has a range of disabling effects. It affects your vision, causes dizziness and joint and muscle pain. You have had to stop driving and public transport is difficult. You rely on very modest social security benefits. This crime was committed only a month after the diagnosis although you suffered symptoms well before that. It was, it seems, motivated by a number of factors which led to some antagonism between you and Mr Moutwari. You spent five days in custody. You have had to comply with strict bail conditions for an extended period. You are entitled to mitigation from your plea of guilty. I do not consider that, having regard to the nature of the crime and your personal circumstances, actual imprisonment is required. Neither home detention nor community service is appropriate. I think it unlikely that there is much risk that this will happen again, but a sentence is necessary to mark the seriousness of what you did, and to make clear to you the likely consequences of a repetition in the hope of making sure that it does not happen again.

Georgia Skrepetos, you are convicted. I make a compensation order in favour of Bilal Moutwari in the sum of \$5,000. I may only permit 28 days for you to pay that amount, but you may apply to enter into a repayment arrangement. You are sentenced to imprisonment for two months. I wholly suspend that term for 18 months from today. It is a condition of that order that while it is in force you do not commit any offence punishable by imprisonment. You should clearly

understand that, if you breach that condition by committing another offence, then a court must order that you serve that term, as well as any new sentence, unless it is unjust.