

# Check for signs of meth

JILL POULSEN

## Buyers warned of health risks from former drug dens

CHECKING for the presence of meth should be part of standard checks before buying a house, along with pest and building inspections, a Darwin company warns.

Octief is well known in the NT for testing asbestos and hazardous materials, but has now branched out into testing homes for the presence of methamphetamines, or "ice".

Octief's National Sales

Manager Bryan Goodall said Darwin was a "hotspot" for meth in Australia.

"Darwin, Perth and Gold Coast are definitely hot spots that have a higher number of users per capita," he said.

He said potential side effects from residual methamphetamine contamination ranged from respiratory problems and psychosis to organ

damage, with small children and babies at higher risk.

"We're screening properties to ensure people's safety and make sure they're not at risk from contamination," Mr Goodall said.

"We can tell you whether it has been manufactured or whether it has been used, we can tell you if it's from manufacture or from use."

Testing for methamphetamine contamination is becoming commonplace in Europe and New Zealand but Australia is lagging behind in awareness, Mr Goodall said.

"This is very much an emerging market but we have adopted an internationally recognised screening process which is adopted as the global standard for best practice," he

said. The residue can leech through paint and even timber.

It is at a homeowner's discretion whether they test their rental property for the presence of meth but the owner of a property has an obligation to ensure that any rental property is safe and free of hazards or toxic chemicals, Mr Goodall said. "It stays on the walls and it doesn't go away ... the cost of

decontamination can be really high," Mr Goodall said.

"Most properties can be decontaminated, it depends how badly contaminated it is, a smoker in a couple of rooms can be around the \$10,000 mark.

"It can be so bad that houses have to be demolished, but that is very rare, in Australia it is as little as 10 per year."

Octief provides a standard baseline test from \$550, taking 10 samples from the property.

## Who will help put out 75 candles?



FROM humble beginnings, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service is celebrating 75 years of keeping Territorians safe.

What started as "one old and worn fire appliance" has now grown into a Territory-

wide organisation boasting 180 professional firefighters and 300 volunteers.

Volunteer Brittany Vitkus said her two years at the Humpty Doo Volunteer Fire brigade had been rewarding, including the "adrenaline

rush" of working alongside professionals during bushfire emergencies. Firefighters yesterday marked National Red Balloon Day, held to recognise the sacrifices of firefighters, past and present.

Chief Fire Officer Mark

Spain said the service had a proud history. "We are very fortunate in the Northern Territory to have a team of such dedicated staff and volunteer members, many of whom have contributed a number of decades service," he said.

## Heat on ABC boss over short-wave

BOTH sides of politics have criticised the ABC boss over a decision to switch off its short-wave radio service in the Northern Territory and parts of the Pacific.

Managing director Michelle Guthrie was grilled about the December announcement when she fronted a Senate hearing in Canberra on Tuesday afternoon. She insisted the ABC would still broadcast via FM and AM frequencies, the viewer access satellite television (VAST) service and online.

The public broadcaster was still meeting its charter obligations, she said, citing examples of similar decisions made abroad including the BBC.

Ms Guthrie said the ABC had only been contacted by 15 people who relied on short-wave radio with concerns.

Nationals senator Bridget McKenzie shared fears from regional residents about getting information during natural disasters and emergencies.

"That is still provided by the Bureau of Meteorology by short-wave," she responded.

Asked by NT Labor senator Malarndirri McCarthy whether she would reverse the decision, Ms Guthrie said "no".

She apologised for not being able to attend a Senate hearing next week.

Senior firefighter Drew Innes and volunteer firefighter Brittany Vitkus are helping celebrate 75 years of the NT Fire and Rescue Service. Picture: IVAN RACHMAN



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