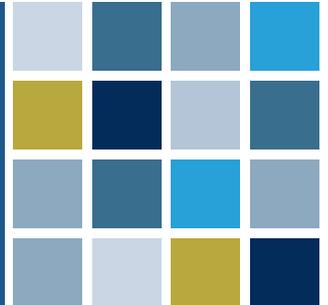




# Strategic Intelligence Bulletin

## Australia 2015: Bomb Statistics (U)



Date of Report: 21 November 2016

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### Summary

- From 1 January to 31 December 2015, Weapons Technical Intelligence received 794 incident reports from the Australian policing jurisdictions. Of these, 15 were deemed to be significant<sup>1</sup> and 46 were recorded as bombings. (U)
- There were two recorded incidents of electrical initiation, with one of those recorded as radio controlled improvised explosive devices. (U)
- Reported casualties for the 2015 year were 12 people injured and five fatalities. (U)
- New South Wales (NSW) reported the highest number of incidents with 350, followed by Victoria with 189 incidents. (U)
- There was a significant decline in reported incidents from both Queensland (from 235 in 2014 to 141 in 2015) and the Australian Capital Territory (from 32 to 17); however, both NSW (292 to 350) and Victoria (13 to 189) saw their reported incidents climb. (U)
- There were 294 incidents recorded as having an "unknown" target. Of the remaining 500, the second most commonly identifiable target/location for explosive-related incidents were residences (other than letterboxes), followed by open area related targets. (U)
- As per previous yearly statistics, the most common improvised explosive devices used in Australia are still of a simple design or are small commercial fireworks. (U)

<sup>1</sup> "Significant" incident: Damage in excess of \$5000; the target is deemed important or sensitive; the device itself or component/s are significant in design, construction or placement; the device is delivered through the mail system; the incident is confirmed to be linked to a known terrorist group; someone is killed or injured as a result of the device functioning

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## 2015 National Incidents

A total of 794<sup>2</sup> national incidents involving explosives were reported by state and territory police services (figure 1 (a)) to Weapons Technical Intelligence (WTI) in 2015. This brief presents statistical information pertaining to the reported incidents<sup>3</sup>. (U)

The incident types are categorised below and in figure 1 (b).

Incident type	Definition	Total Incidents
Recovery	An incident involving the recovery of an explosive device or material.	293
Bombing	An incident involving the functioning of an explosive device.	46
Threat	The threatened use of an explosive device at a certain time and place (written or verbal by any medium).	124
Suspect item	An item considered to be suspicious by response personnel, requiring specialist inspection, but found to be innocuous.	274
Attempted bombing	An incident involving the use of an explosive device that has failed to function (e.g. through design or assembly defect, component failure or render-safe procedure).	19
Other	Incident not described by other categories.	18 <sup>4</sup>
Hoax	An item that is placed, designed or manufactured in a manner intended to appear or otherwise cause on to believe that the item is an explosive device.	20
Theft	The illicit acquisition of an explosive device or material.	0

In comparison to the statistics for 2014, reported bombings are down approximately 18% (56 in 2014), with no single explanation attributed to this decline. Suspect items are up 31% (209 in 2014). There were nil reported thefts during the year compared to one reported theft in 2014. (U)

The incident type "threat" is up approximately 42% (87 in 2014); however, from the 124 reported threats, QLD accounted for 39 (31%) of those. Of the QLD threats, eight occurred in January and twelve occurred in November. There were no obvious patterns to the threats, as they occurred across the state and the targets were varied. The motive behind the vast majority was related to criminal nuisance/prank with the preferred delivery platform involving a phone call. (U)

<sup>2</sup> Total number is up from 2014 due to procedural changes and updated statistics provided by NSW RBDU and updated statistics provided by Victoria Police.

<sup>3</sup> Disclaimer: This brief pertains only to incidents reported to WTI; it is possible that there have been incidents that were not reported and therefore not incorporated into the present brief.

<sup>4</sup> Accidental explosion (4 reported incidents) and premature explosion (1 reported incident) are included in this total.

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In respect to other incident types, suspect items were up approximately 31% (209 in 2014) and hoax incidents were up approximately 43% (14 in 2014) when compared to the previous year. (U)

Recoveries accounted for approximately 37% (293) of the total number of incidents. Of the recoveries, 37% (108) incidents were related to the recovery of commercially manufactured fireworks, 24% (70) incidents involved the recovery of commercially manufactured explosives (i.e. det cord, emulsion carts, detonators, etc.) and 25% (74) incidents related to the recovery of military explosive ordnance (MILEO). The recovery of MILEO saw an increase of approximately 118% (34 in 2014). The statistics do not attribute this increase to any particular cause. (U)

### Incidents by State

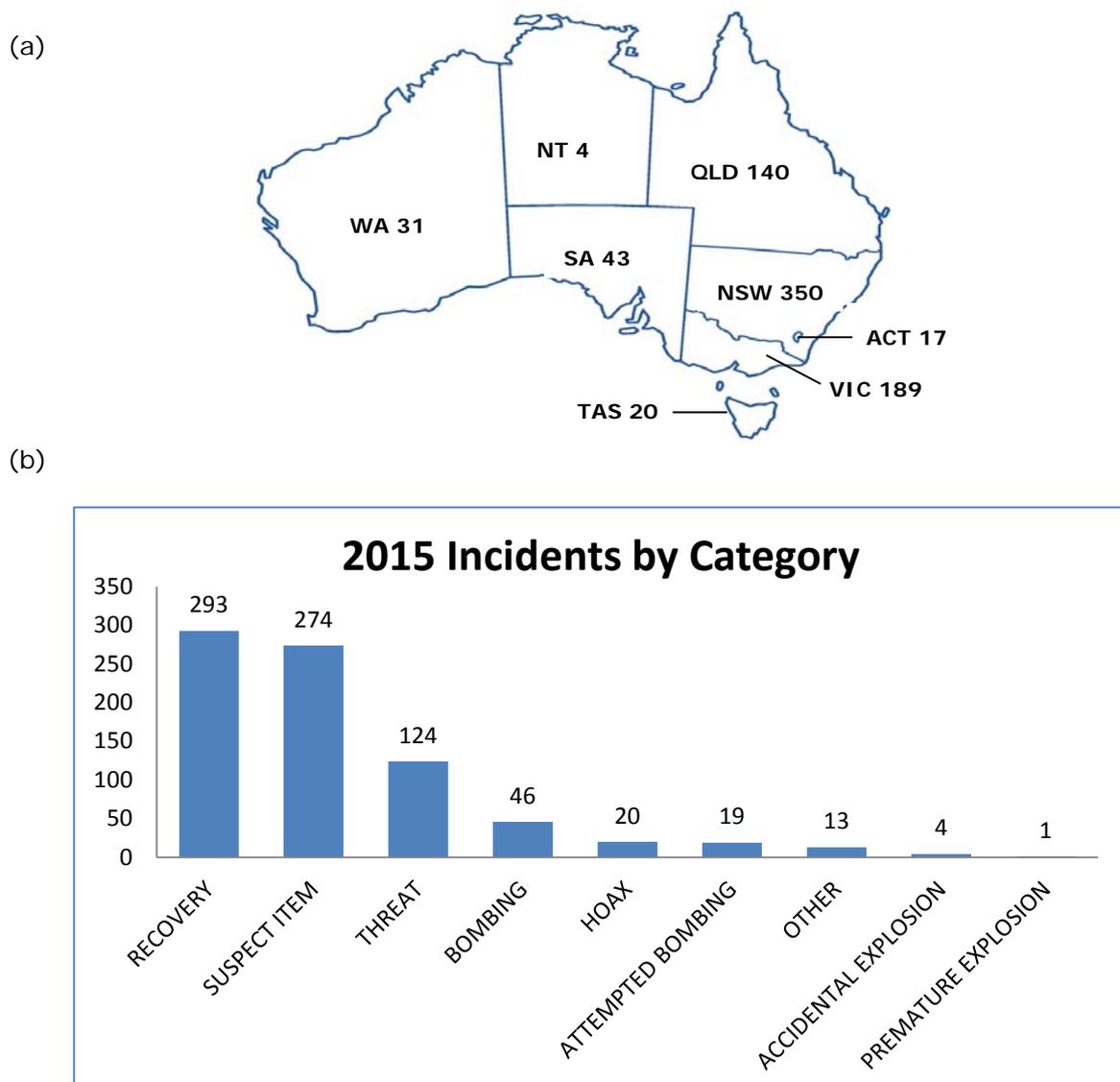
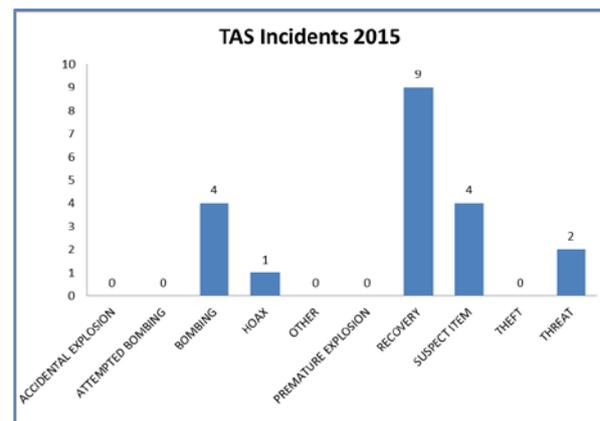
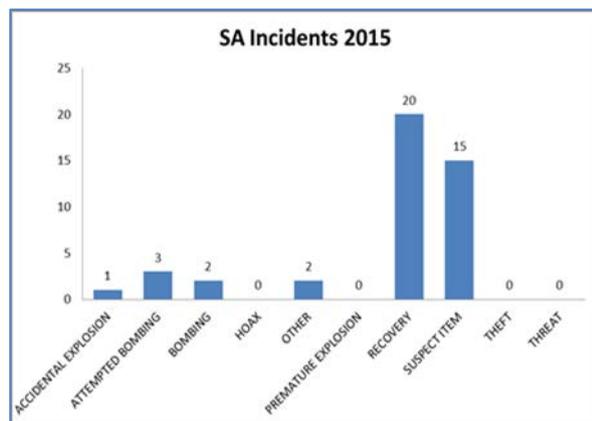
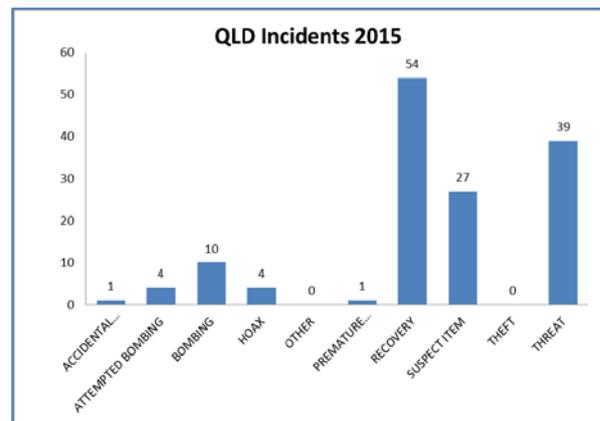
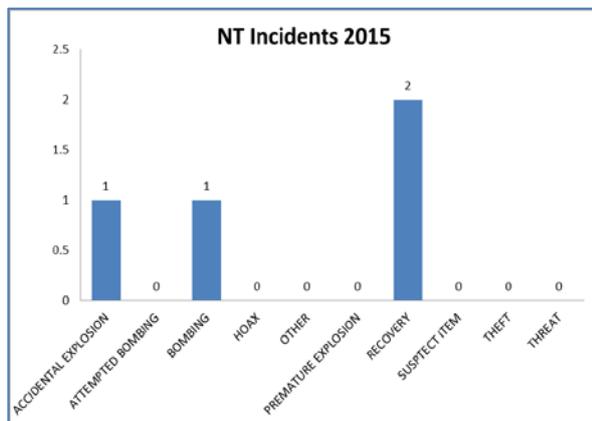
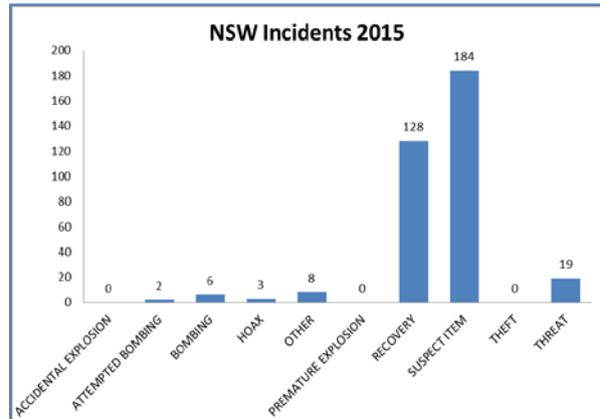
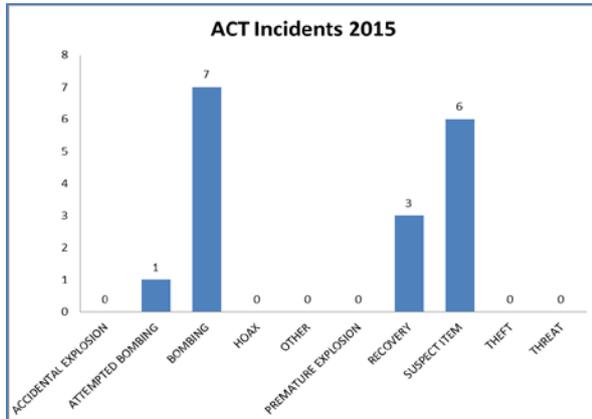


Figure 1: (a) 2015 incidents by state/territory; (b) 2015 incidents by category. (U)

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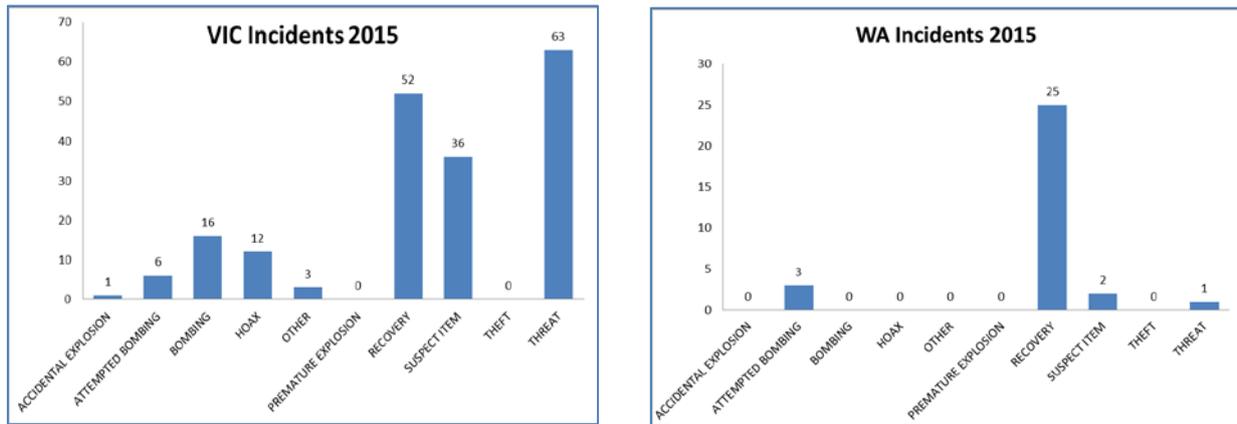
## Total incidents in 2015 by state and territory



**Figure 2:** Incidents reported by state and territory police jurisdictions in 2015. (U)

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**Figure 3:** Incidents reported by state and territory police jurisdictions in 2015. (U)

## Incident Targets

### Targets: all incidents

As illustrated below (figure 4), the vast majority of incident targets (37%) were not explicitly specified in reporting (i.e. “unknown”); this normally corresponds to an incident where there is no clear identifiable target or premises. This represents a decrease of just over 10% (329) from 2014. There is no clear indication to explain this decrease. (U)

In terms of targets, compared to 2014, there were eight targets that recorded a decrease in numbers; however in contrast, there were also eight targets that recorded increases. There were quite substantial decreases in the targeting of retail businesses (down 55%) (27 in 2014), aviation: airline (down 46% - 13 in 2014), government (down 30% - 33 in 2014) and transport (down 23% - 22 in 2014). Of the eight incident categories that recorded increases, aviation: general recorded a six-fold increase (zero in 2014) and both education and hospitality/tourism recorded 153% increases (17 each in 2014). (U)

The targeting of residence (either letterbox or other) was up approximately 83% compared to 2014 (combined total of 145 versus 79 for 2014). This was in part due to a 159% increase in the targeting of residences (other than letterboxes); however when combined, they still account for the second most common target, accounting for approximately 18% of the total. The targeting of letterboxes has been on a slight decline since 2013 (36 reported incidents) after a peak of 195 reported letterbox incidents in 2012. (U)

Incidents occurring in “open areas” accounted for approximately 10% of reported targets (third most), which was higher than 2014 (8%). Incidents occurring in “open areas” typically refer to public parks, and generally involve nuisance acts or experimentation with some type of explosive (usually fireworks or some form of pyrotechnic composition). (U)

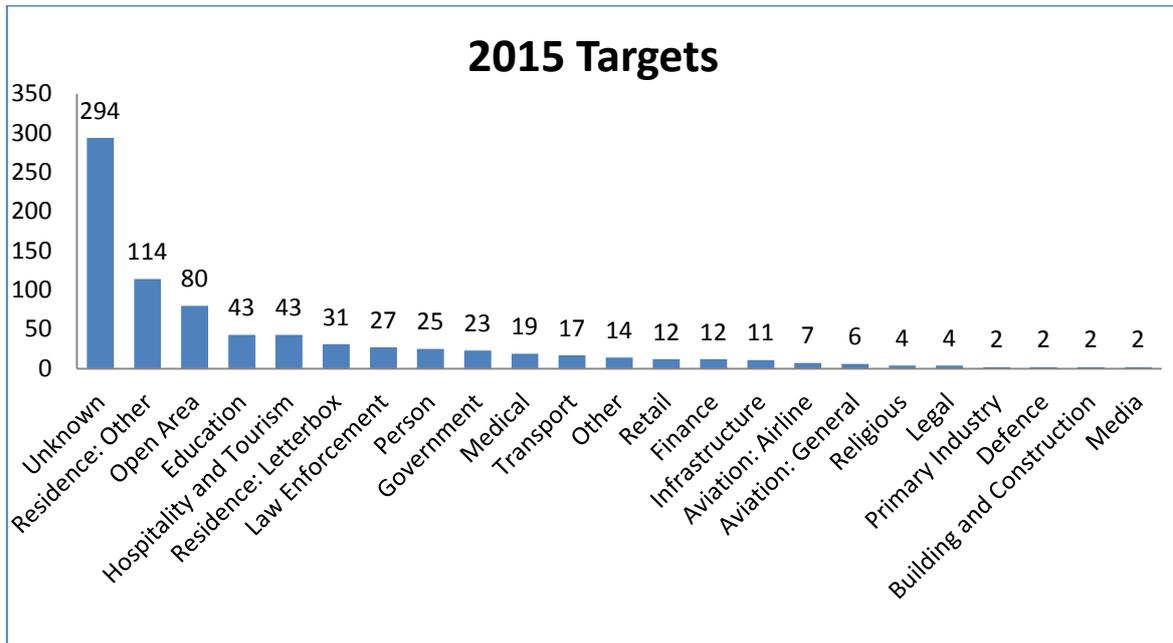


Figure 4: 2015 Targets. (U)

**Targets associated with significant incidents**

In 2015, there were 15 incidents classified as significant (figure 5 (a)). This was down 28% from the 21 reported as significant in 2014. Of these, seven incidents were recorded as having an “unknown target”, followed by “person” with four incidents (figure 5 (b)). (U)

There were five recorded fatalities (up from two in 2014) for 2015 from three separate incidents and a total of 12 people received injuries from various incidents (down from 32 in 2014). The five fatalities recorded included a murder, a murder/suicide and a suicide. (U)

The two murders relate to the following incidents:

1. On 24 July, a male person was killed by an improvised explosive device after opening the garage door of his rear shed in Portland in the NSW Central West. Evidence relating to an IED was recovered by Police at the scene. This incident was not related to terrorism and Police were investigating local links. (U)
2. On 28 July, a male adult is believed to have killed himself and his two small children by detonating an unknown explosive charge inside a caravan in Mt Isa, QLD. This was deemed a double murder/suicide. (U)

Two incidents involving experimentation caused a total of five injuries, whilst other incidents involved robbery (ATMs), vandalism and nuisance acts, etc. that were classed as significant due to sophistication, rarity, methodology employed, or amount of damage caused. (U)

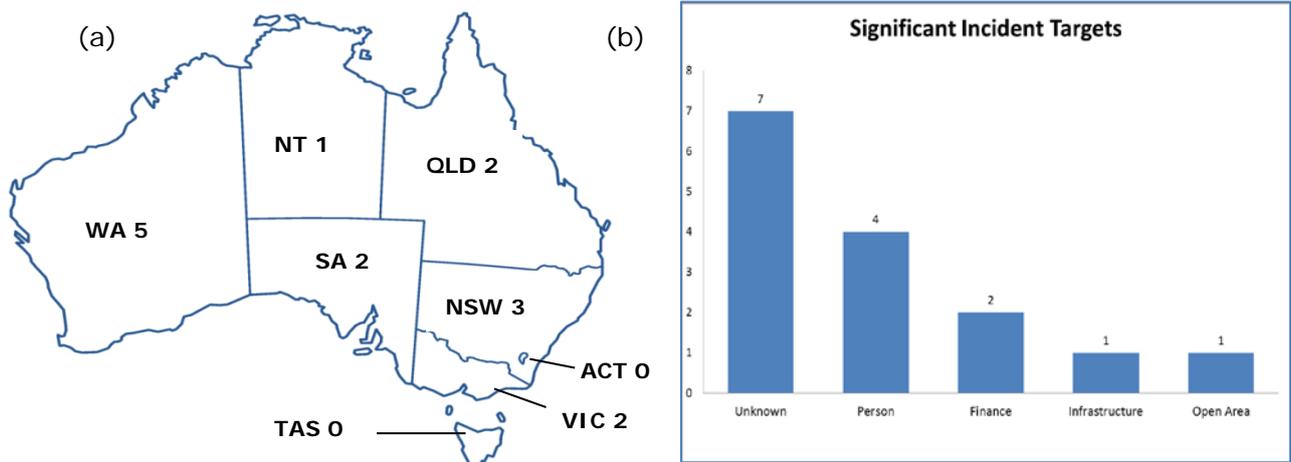


Figure 5: (a) 2015 Significant Incidents per state/territory and; (b) by Target. (U)

### Motive

In the vast majority of incidents the motive (498 incidents) was unknown (figure 6). Although only marginally up in actual recorded motives (479 in 2014), as a percentage of reported motives, it accounts for the same 63% of the as it did in 2014. Of the known motives, criminal: nuisance/prank (127 incidents) was the most prevalent, constituting just over 16%, while almost 4% of incidents (29) were attributable to suicide/harm self/mental dysfunction. (U)

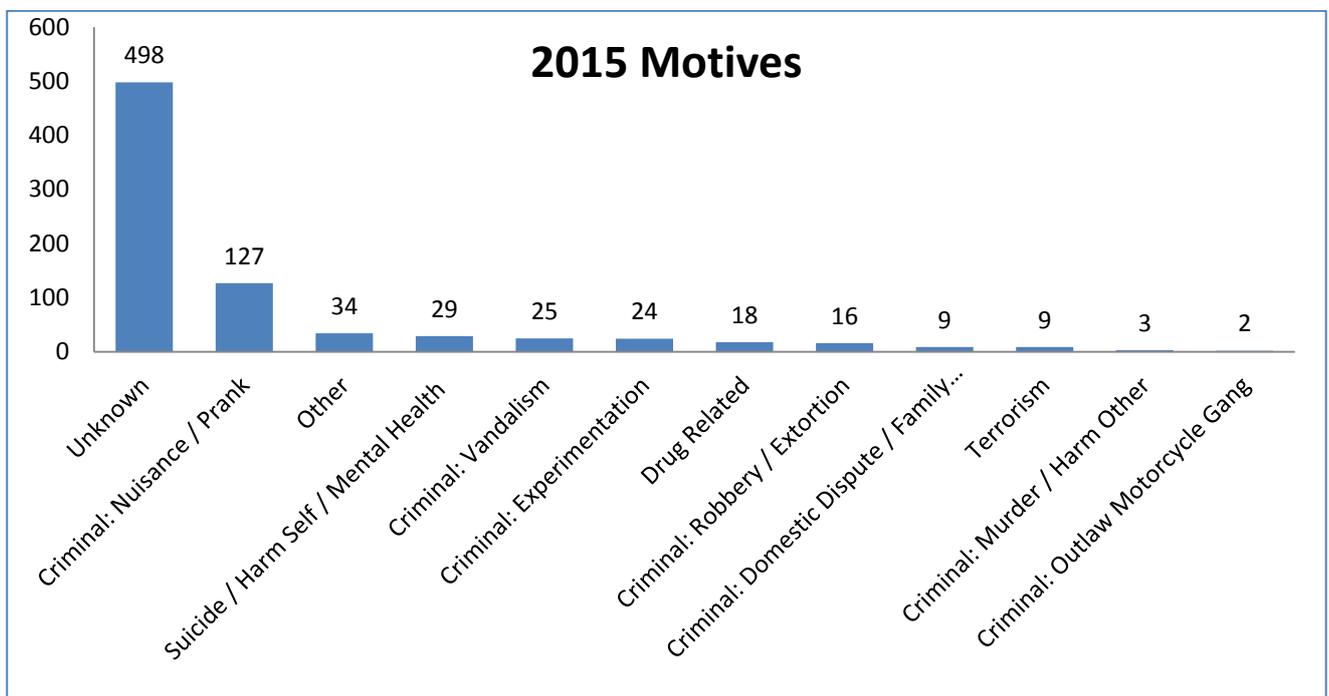


Figure 6: 2015 Motives. (U)

## IED Componentry

### Initiation systems

Of the 46 recorded bombings, initiations were recorded on 15 occasions as being unknown. Of the known recorded initiation systems, the majority (nine incidents) were found to be commercial fireworks utilising a time delay fuse. Of the remaining 22 incidents, the majority were initiated using some type of delay fuse attached to an improvised main charge. The use of sparklers<sup>5</sup> to initiate a device was recorded on eight occasions. For the 2015 year, there were two recorded incidents of electrical initiation occurring, with one of those recorded as being RCIED. One of the incidents resulted in the death of the victim and the incidents are briefly outlined below. (U)

- On Tuesday 23 June 2015 in Brookfield Victoria, a male person committed suicide at his rented property. The improvised explosive device (IED), which was victim operated, consisted of a vehicle battery, a combination of an electric detonator and possibly a non-electric detonator and at least one cart of Powergel. The device was apparently initiated by placing the electric detonator wires onto the battery terminals. (U)
- On Friday 24 July 2015 in Portland NSW, a male person was killed by an IED after opening the garage door of his rear shed in Portland on the NSW Central Coast. A number of IED components were located at the scene. (U)
- On Tuesday 1 September 2015 in Raceview QLD an IED, attached to security screen of a private residence by magnets, detonated. Located at the scene was a simple radio control firing device wired to commercial hobby fuse ignitor, which was placed into a tube of gun powder attached to two cans of butane gas. The device had ignited the gun powder only, leaving the cans of butane remaining intact. (U)

### Power sources

Of all incidents recorded for 2015, two recorded incidents made use of a battery as a power source. Of the two, one was attributed to a bombing and one was attributed to an attempted bombing. Of the batteries used, both used different size and voltages, namely AAA and 12V, to supply power. (U)

### Main charge

Of the 46 recorded bombing incidents, the majority (15 incidents or 32.6%) were reported as having an unknown main charge. Small IEDs containing a pyrotechnic composition (i.e. commercial fireworks or homemade) were used in 11 (24%) of the reported bombings. The use of commercial explosives was recorded once and was associated with the bombing suicide in Brookfield Victoria. CO2 bulbs were recorded in six incidents. The use of various types of liquid to

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<sup>5</sup> "Sparklers" are essentially hand-held fireworks, comprised of a rigid metal wire of the order of tens of centimetres in length, which have been coated in a slow-burning pyrotechnic composition (of which there are numerous variations) and allowed to dry. (U)

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act as an incendiary main charge was reported in six incidents. Discounting the use of liquid based bombings, all other main charges were less than 1kg in weight. (U)

## Switches

In 2015, as in previous recorded years, the use of any type of switch<sup>6</sup> as part of an IED (including bombings, attempted bombings and hoax devices) in Australia is uncommon. Of the four known switches that were used as part of an IED during 2015, one is not able to be reported due to its classification. The following reportable switches were used as part of an IED:

- An Alpha Fire firing module was incorporated as part of an RCIED in relation to the incident at Raceview, QLD (refer Initiation Systems). (U)
- On 22 January 2015, a hoax device (possibly a training device) was located in the wheelhouse of a Sydney ferry. The hoax device consisted of three 1L cleaning liquid bottles taped together with black tape and the word "Caution" in yellow. One of the three bottles had a red switch attached to bottle's opening. (U)

## Containers

Of the 46 bombing incidents recorded, 19 (41%) incidents were recorded as either an unknown container or no container. Of those that were recorded as having a container, plastic containers were the second most common (eight), followed by pipe bombs/metal containers (seven) and CO2/soda cylinders (five). Other types of containers utilised were cardboard, glass, foam, aerosol cans, and gas cylinders. (U)

## Fragmentation/enhancements

In 2015, there were two recorded incidents of fragmentation being added to an IED and these are outlined below:

- Nuts and bolts were added to one of the plastic containers in relation to the Sydney ferry hoax (refer Switches). (U)
- On Thursday 15 October 2015, a pipe bomb wrapped in duct tape was recovered from a person of interest at the Elizabeth Police Station in SA. The IED consisted of a 4 inch length of galvanised steel pipe with two end caps fitted, one sparkler as the fuse and a quantity of double based smokeless powder as the fill. Additional fragmentation of nuts and bolts, contained in a zip lock bag, was taped to the outside of the pipe. (U)

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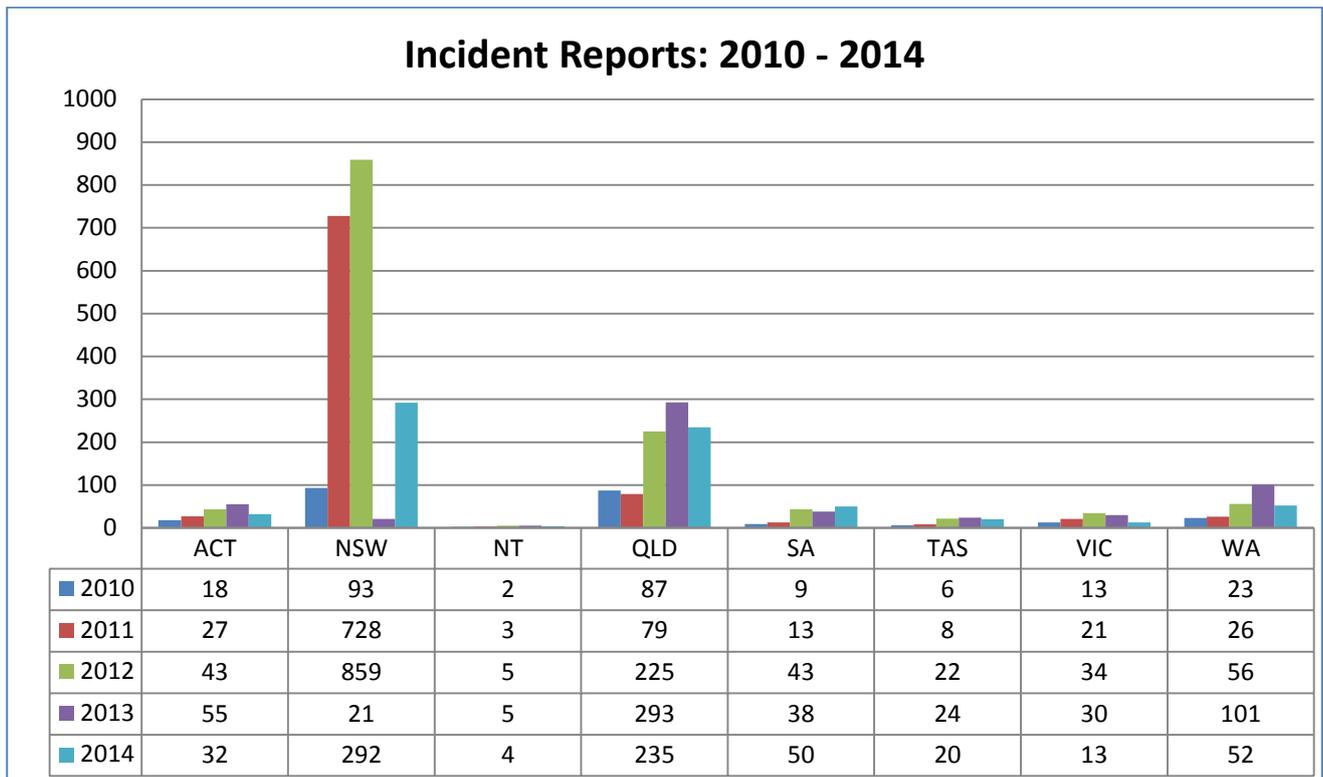
<sup>6</sup> A device for making, breaking, or changing a connection in an IED; A single switch can have multiple functions (i.e. arming and/or firing).

## Comparison with Previous Years

In comparison to the previous year of 2014, the number of incidents reported increased from 698 to 794; an increase of almost 14%. All states, except for the NT, TAS and VIC, were down in the number of incidents reported; however, there is no obvious explanation for this in the statistics.

- ACT: 32 in 2014, 17 in 2015,
- SA: 51 in 2014, 43 in 2015,
- NT: 4 in 2014, 4 in 2015,
- WA: 52 in 2014, 31 in 2015,
- QLD: 235 in 2014, 140 in 2015,
- VIC<sup>7</sup>: 13 in 2014, 189 in 2015,
- NSW<sup>8</sup>: 356 in 2014, 350 in 2015,
- TAS: 20 in 2014, 20 in 2015. (U)

Incidents over the previous five year period are also shown graphically below in Figure 7. (U)



**Figure 7:** Incidents reported by state and territory jurisdictions over the past 5 years. (U)

<sup>7</sup> Updated statistics provided by Victoria Police.

<sup>8</sup> A change in NSWPOL data collection procedures has resulted in this apparent drop in incidents.

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## Conclusions

For the 2015 calendar year, and as per previous years, the availability of commercial explosives and their potential use in criminal activity is still a viable threat in Australia. Although used widely in the mining industry, with restrictions posed on who can purchase and possess them, commercial explosives still account for almost a quarter of all recoveries (24%). Many of these recoveries have been from private residences with little or no security, making them a potential theft opportunity. (U)

The use of commercial fireworks around Australia in either bombings or attempted bombings is still prevalent. With their recovery as part of a suspect item, or being recovered in general (37% of recoveries), CFWs continue to present in yearly statistics. (U)

The 2015 statistics also indicate that the vast majority of incidents in relation to motives and targets are unknown. Although an offender will usually have a target and/or motive in mind, the number of reported unknowns usually relates to a lack of information. (U)

Of all of the IEDs that were reported during the year, the IEDs related to Portland (VIC) and Raceview (QLD) were generally more sophisticated. Generally, IEDs reported during the year were considered small (sub-kilogram) and technologically unsophisticated. (U)

The statistics presented in this report indicate that the IED threat within Australia is significantly lower than many other nations when compared to global statistics. (U)

Contact	AFP19669
Team	Weapons Technical Intelligence, Specialist Operations
Phone	+61 02 6133 3950
Email	<a href="mailto:WTI@afp.gov.au">WTI@afp.gov.au</a>
Consultation	

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