



Strategic Intelligence Report

Australia 2012: Bomb Statistics



Date of Report: 5 June 2014

PROMIS Document ID 8065406

This report is designed to convey strategic intelligence to clients.

Summary

- For the year 1 January to 31 December 2012, Technical and Forensic Intelligence (TFI) received 1287 incident reports from the Australian policing jurisdictions. Of these, 28 were deemed to be significant¹ by the respective reporting agencies. (U)
- Associated casualties included 1 fatality and 15 injuries. (U)
- Of the 1287 incidents, 476 were recorded as 'bombings'. (U)
- The highest number of reported incidents, 859, was recorded by New South Wales. (U)
- The most common identifiable target/location of explosive-related incidents is private residences. Of these, approximately half targeted letterboxes specifically. (U)
- Criminal nuisance and vandalism were the most common motivations, but others include disputes, extortion, robbery, experimentation and self-harm. (U)
- The most common components used in the construction of these improvised explosive devices (IED) consist of a pyrotechnic composition in a simple device (e.g. soda siphon bulbs with a sparkler fuse). (U)

¹ '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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2012 National Incidents

A total of 1287 national incidents involving explosives were reported by state and territory police services to Technical and Forensic Intelligence (TFI) in 2012. This brief presents statistical information pertaining to the reported incidents².

The incident types are categorised below.

Incident type	Definition ³	Total incidents
Bombing	An incident involving the functioning of an explosive device.	476
Recovery	An incident involving the recovery of an explosive device or material.	350
Threat	The threatened use of an explosive device at a certain time and place (written or verbal by any medium).	263
Theft	The illicit acquisition of an explosive device or material.	52
Suspect item	An item considered to be suspicious by response personnel, requiring specialist inspection, but found to be innocuous.	50
Other	Incident not described by other categories.	48
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).	33
Hoax	An item that is placed, designed or manufactured in a manner intended to appear or otherwise cause one to believe that the item is an explosive device.	15

Incidents defined as 'significant' meet some or all of the following criteria:

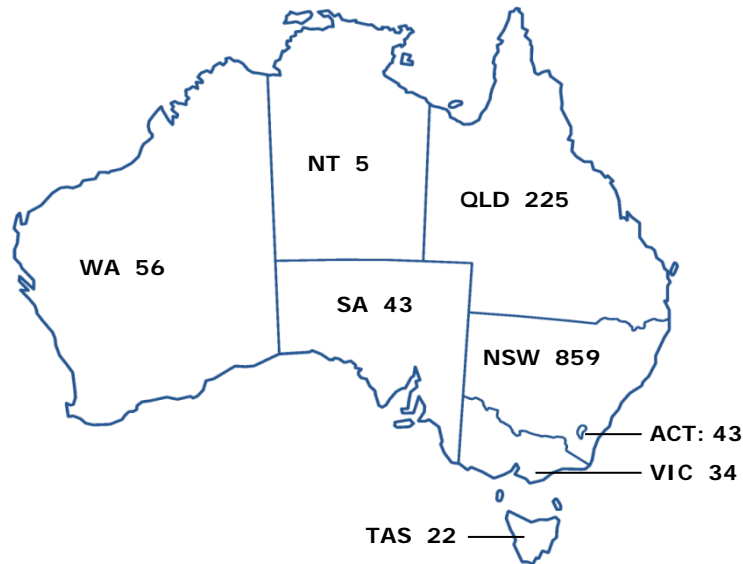
- Damage in excess of \$5000;
- The target was deemed important or sensitive;
- The device itself or component/s were significant in design, construction or placement;
- The device was delivered through the mail system;
- The incident was confirmed to be linked to a known terrorist group;
- Someone was killed or injured as a result of the device functioning.

² Disclaimer: This brief pertains only to incidents reported to TFI; it is possible that there have been incidents that were not reported and therefore not incorporated into the present paper.

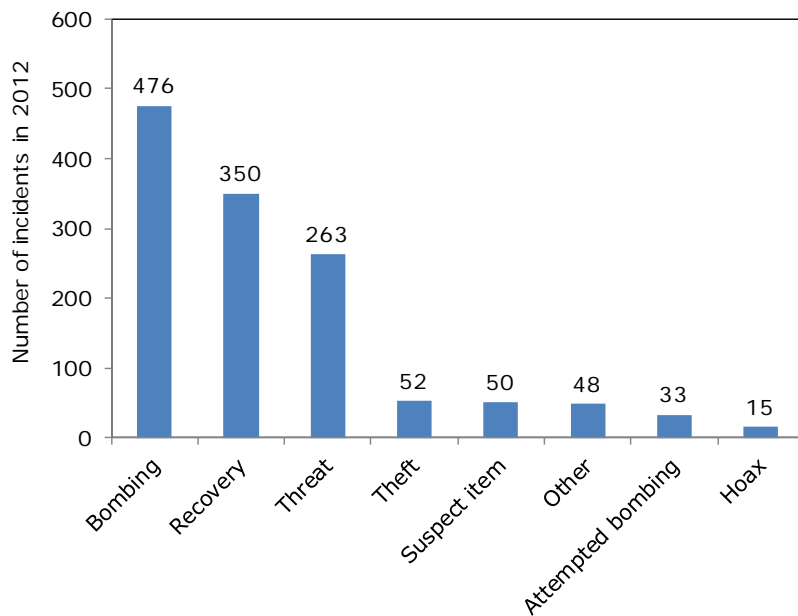
³ *Bombs: Defusing the Threat* (5th Ed.) Australian Federal Police, 2009

Incidents by State

Total incidents in 2012



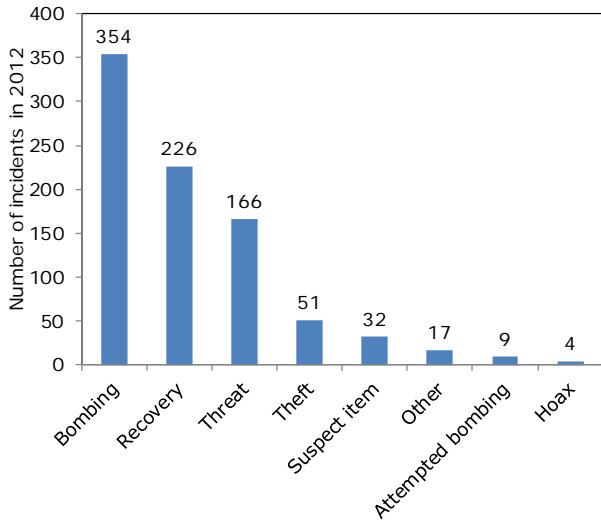
National Incidents Reported to TFI in 2012



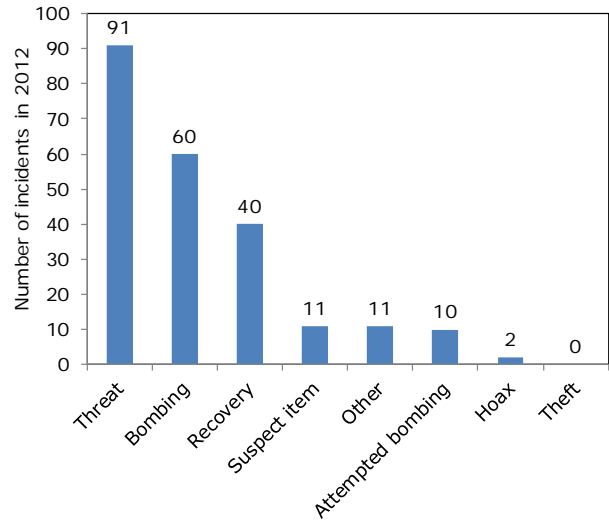
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Total incidents in 2012 by state and territory

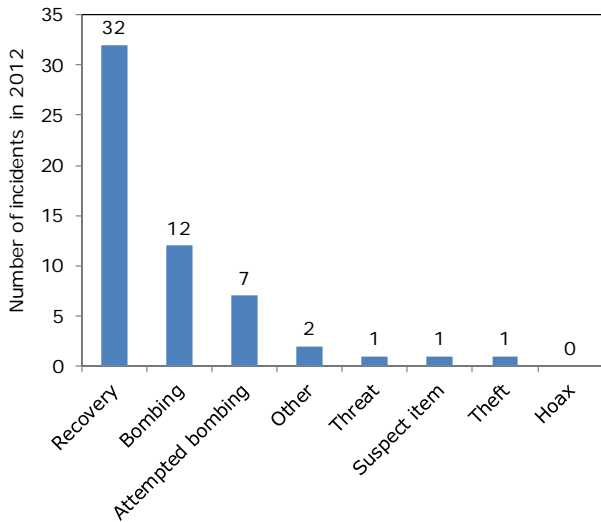
Incidents in New South Wales



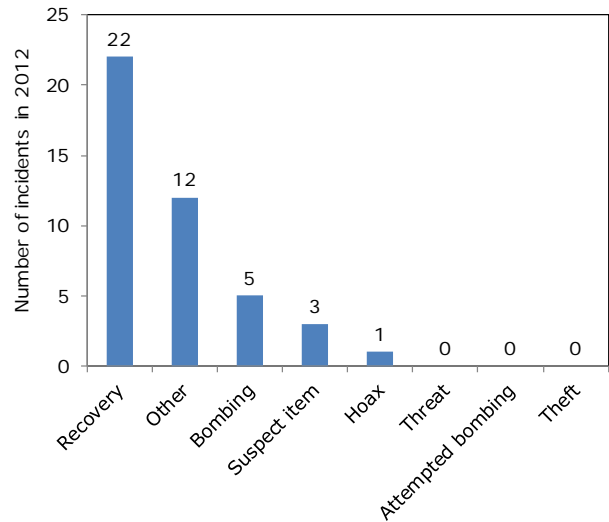
Incidents in Queensland



Incidents in Western Australia

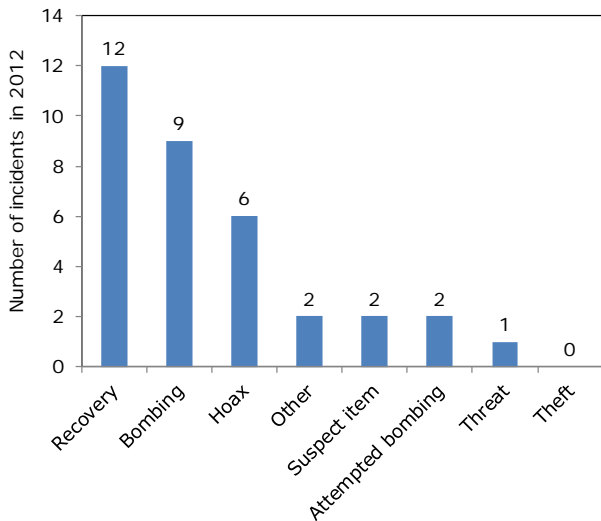


Incidents in South Australia

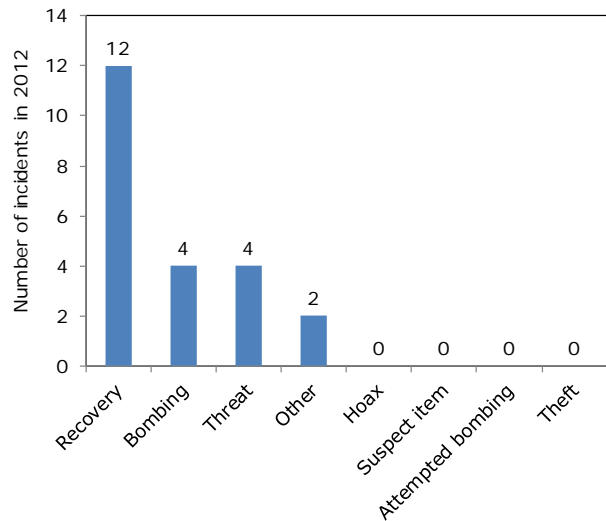


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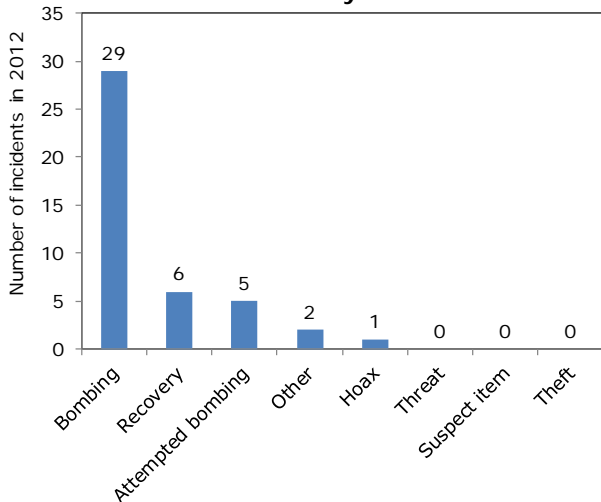
Incidents in Victoria



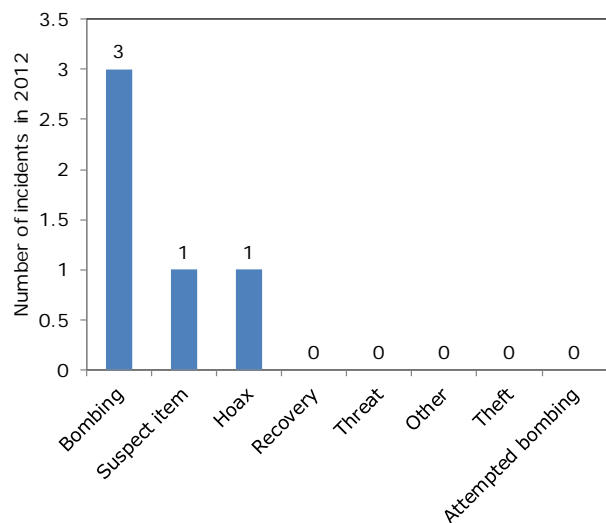
Incidents in Tasmania



Incidents in the Australian Capital Territory



Incidents in the Northern Territory



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Incident Targets

Targets for all incidents

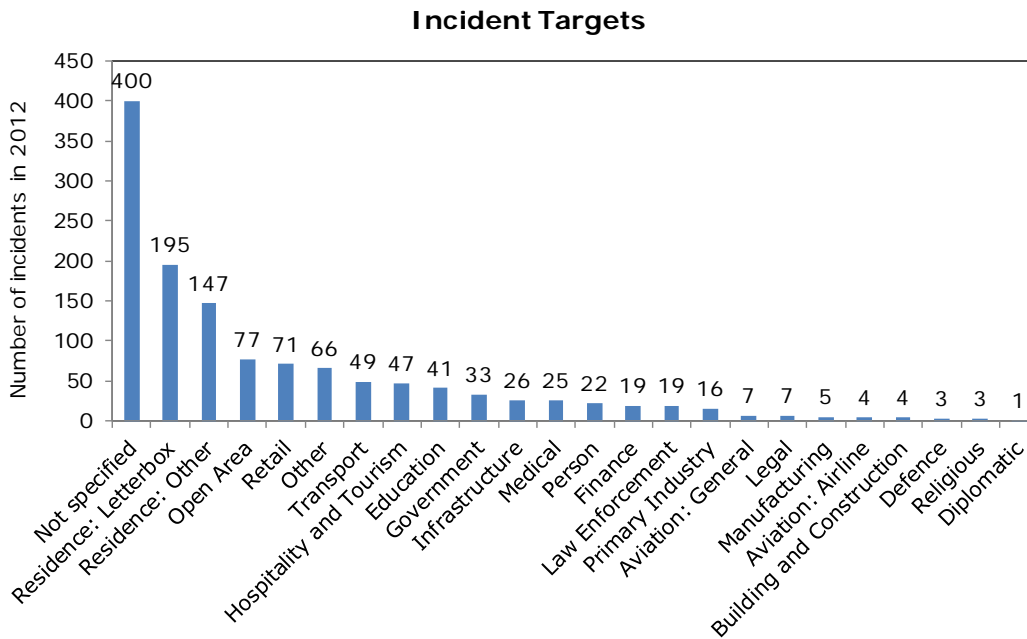
As illustrated by the figure below, the majority of incident locations were not explicitly specified in reporting; this normally corresponds to an open area of land or water where there is no clear specifiable target or premises.

In terms of targets, private residences constituted 26% of the total number of incidents in 2012. More than half of these involved specific targeting of the letterbox, and were classed as criminal vandalism.

Approximately 6% of incidents were reported as occurring in 'open areas', which typically refer to public parks, and generally involve nuisance acts or experimentation with explosives. A similar fraction of incidents involved retail locations, most of which were classed as nuisance activities but also included deliberate vandalism, domestic disputes, robbery and extortion.

Transport, hospitality/tourism and education locations constituted about 10% of incidents, the motivations for many of which are unknown, but include vandalism and nuisance.

While fewer incidents occurred at various other locations, motivations were similar, as discussed in the following section of this document.



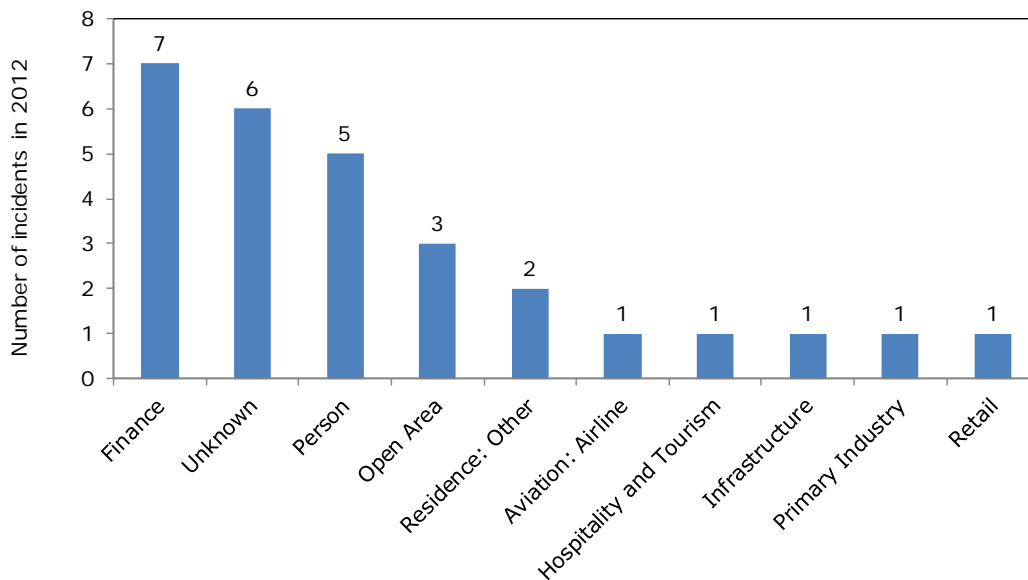
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Targets associated with significant incidents

In 2012, there were 28 incidents classified as significant. One quarter of these incidents targeted financial institutions, mostly for the purposes of robbery (the targeting of automatic teller machines in particular is not uncommon). Significant incidents targeting persons included disputes and suicide. Other incidents involved experimentation, vandalism and nuisance acts, but may be classed as significant due to the sophistication or rarity of the methodology employed, or the amount of damage inflicted.



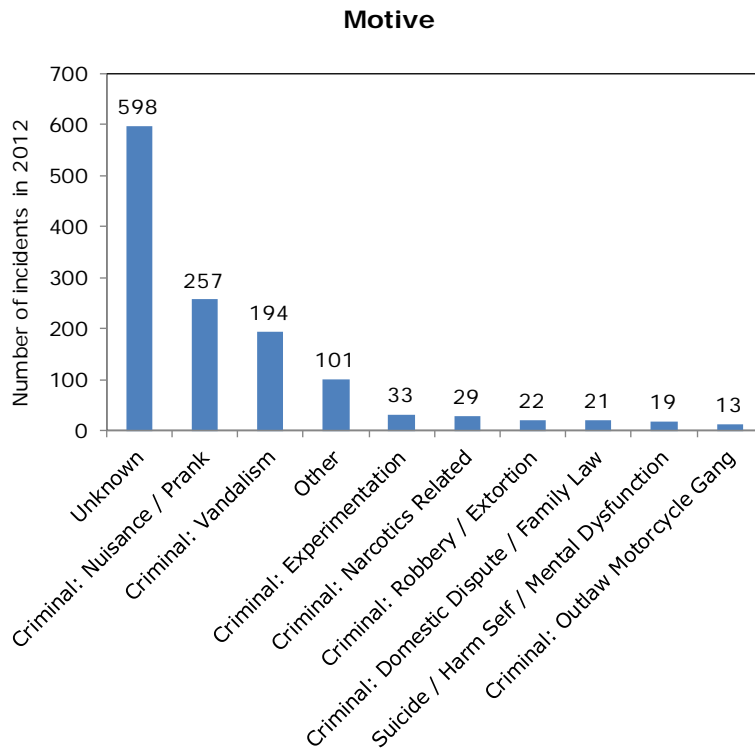
Significant Incident Targets



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Motive

In the vast majority (46%) of incidents, the motivation was either unknown or not reported. Of known motives, criminal nuisance was the most prevalent, constituting 20%, while approximately 15% of incidents were attributable to vandalism. The remainder of motivations contributed between 1% and 3% of the total each.



Casualties

One incident involved suicide through use of an explosive. Fifteen injuries arising from eleven incidents were also reported.

- One incident was associated with robbery/extortion;
- Two incidents involved experimentation with explosives;
- Six incidents involved nuisance acts (such as 'playing with' explosives); and
- Two incidents were unknown/unreported.

IED Componentry

Initiation systems

The majority of initiation systems were found to be improvised. Of these, the majority were made of sparklers⁴ and/or other pyrotechnic components attached to an improvised main charge.

Power sources

Of all the incidents recorded for 2012, five IEDs were reported as having a viable power source. Two involved 9V batteries, one involved 6V, one involved 12V and the other was a hoax device containing batteries.

Main charge

Of the 476 bombing incidents recorded, a high percentage was reported as small IEDs containing a pyrotechnic composition, constructed from soda siphon bulbs, sparklers, and aluminium foil. Of the significant incidents reported, four had 'commercial explosive' recorded as the main charge.

Containers

Of the 1287 incidents recorded, very few made use of any sophisticated containers. Of the significant incidents, two were recorded as being of a 'pipe bomb configuration'.

Fragmentation/enhancements

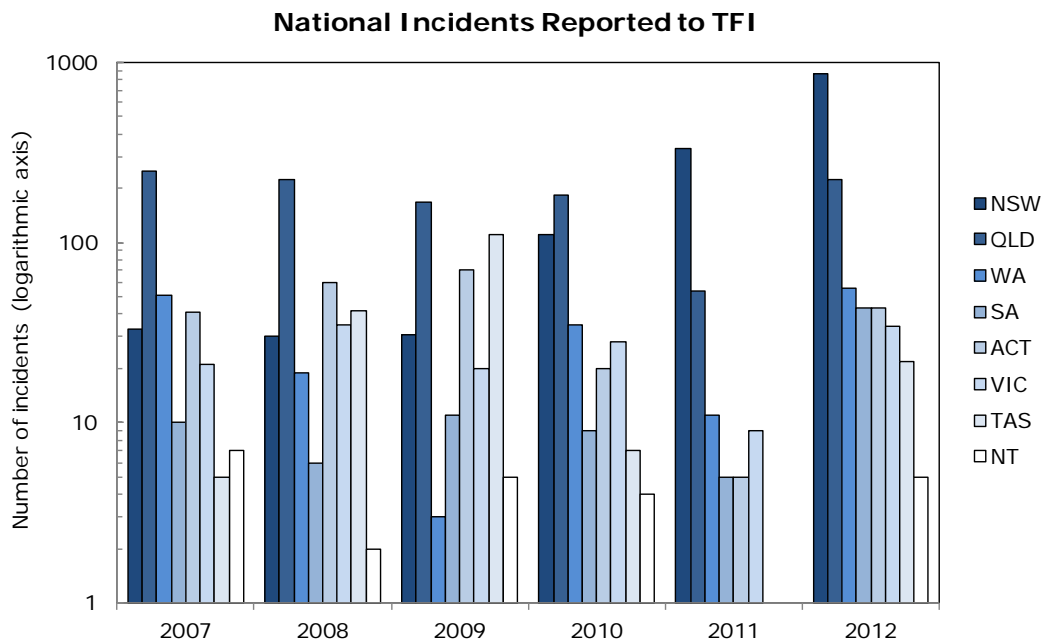
There was no recorded evidence in Australia during 2012 describing any device that has functioned or been recovered with any enhancements or additional fragmentation. Therefore, any fragmentation from functioned devices has either been primary fragmentation from the destroyed container or secondary fragmentation from proximate materials.

⁴ '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.

Comparison with Previous Years

Incidents over a five year period are shown graphically below. With comparison to the previous year, the number of incidents reported increased in 2012:

- ACT: 43 in 2012, 5 in 2011,
- SA: 43 in 2012, 5 in 2011,
- NT: 5 in 2012, 1 in 2011,
- WA: 56 in 2012, 11 in 2011,
- QLD: 225 in 2012, 54 in 2011,
- VIC: 34 in 2012, 9 in 2011,
- NSW: 859 in 2012, 334 in 2011,
- TAS: 22 in 2012, 0 in 2011.



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Conclusions

For the 2012 calendar year, the reported incidents indicate that a large number of devices have been used in open spaces and in small scale property damage incidents.

The IEDs reported during this period were generally small (sub-kilogram) and technologically unsophisticated.

The statistics here indicate that the IED threat within Australia is significantly lower than many other nations when compared to global statistics.

Upon request, Technical and Forensic Intelligence are able to provide information and assistance with regards to improvised explosive devices. Additionally, NSW Police Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit (PRBDU) and QLD Police Explosive Ordnance Response Team (EORT) employ intelligence officers who produce a monthly intelligence bulletin for dissemination to relevant agencies.

For more information, please contact: TFI@afp.gov.au