

Ex-Comanchero Mark Ahern jailed for over Kittens strip club fire in Caulfield South

By Karen Percy

Arson

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The fire gutted the Kittens strip club and caused significant damage. (ABC News: Margaret Paul)

The former treasurer of the Comanchero bikie gang has been sentenced to six years in prison for torching a Kittens strip club in Melbourne.

Mark Ahern, 33, was given a non-parole period of four years after pleading guilty to setting fire to the Caulfield South strip club in February 2016.

The court heard Ahern, from Berwick, climbed onto the roof of the venue and entered through a vent opening.

He spread petrol around in a kitchen and storage area and set it alight, causing a large fire which took 57 firefighters to extinguish.

The fire caused almost \$1.4 million damage.

County Court Judge Peter Wischusen told Ahern the fire was "carefully planned and executed by you [and] intended to lead to the destruction of the building".

"The criminal purpose of the fire has never been explained," Judge Wischusen said.

He described Ahern's involvement in the Comanchero club as a way of dealing with a "low sense of self esteem", and something that gave him a "sense of belonging".

Ahern had a long history of substance abuse, but Judge Wischusen said he had reached a major turning point in his life.

"Despite your offending, you still have the support of your long-suffering parents," he said.

The court had previously heard his mother, Lorraine Ahern, said she was very disappointed when he joined the bikie gang.

"I told him if he did become a Comanchero he would be disinherited, which we've done," she said.

At the time, she promised to report any of her son's breaches of bail to police.

"I just wish you could put a GPS tracking device on him," she said.

Ahern also pleaded guilty to one charge of handling stolen goods and a minor weapons offence.



Mark Ahern will be eligible for parole in four years.
(ABC News, file photo)

The court had previously heard Ahern's blood was found on a fence and the lid of a bin at the rear of the club, after he cut his forehead during the arson attack.

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