



Runway: models Silvana, Steve, Lexi, Nathan and Danielle at the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival casting at Malvern Town Hall yesterday, and former premier Steve Bracks' son Nick Bracks, right. Picture: DAVID CAIRD

Bracks' son ready to be a model citizen

FORMER Victorian premier Steve Bracks' strapping son Nick strutted at a model casting call yesterday for next month's L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival. Bracks was signed on Monday by prominent model manager Greg Tyshing, who

described him as having a "great, marketable look". Bracks was among 1000 hopefuls who paraded in front of festival organisers at Malvern Town Hall for the chance to be selected to walk in the autumn/winter collection shows.

Tyshing said Bracks was recommended by a hairdresser, and he sent him to yesterday's casting with only one photo in his portfolio. Bracks, who has been out of the public eye since appearing in court for driving offences two years

ago, is not the first former Victorian premier's son to pursue a modelling career. Jeff Kennett's son Angus is a high-profile model. Tyshing said he would build Bracks' portfolio and mentor his early career before he is signed by an agent.



'Worst mum' avoids prison

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Magistrate Clive Alsop gave her a five-month prison sentence, wholly suspended for two years, and told her she was on her last chance.

The court was told that when Eastwood gave her son grappa in July 2008, she was already on a suspended sentence after being convicted five months earlier of leaving her three children under 10 home alone for several hours while she went drinking with a friend.

She had also breached a 2005 suspended-sentence for refusing a breath test and driving while disqualified.

Eastwood, who has a five-month-old daughter, pleaded guilty to reckless conduct placing a person in danger of serious injury, which carries up to five years' jail, and failing to protect a child from harm.

Mr Alsop warned her: "I don't have to tell you what's going to happen if you come back at some stage in the future having done anything which would adversely affect the welfare of your children."

Mr Alsop said several changes in Eastwood's life — including her abstinence since September and having strong supports — amounted to exceptional circumstances warranting a suspended sentence.

He said he also had to take into account the impact on her children if she were jailed.

Mr Alsop took the opportunity to accuse Victorian politicians of interfering in court business, saying they were "apparently gearing up to do certain things towards the end of the year", which could include stopping suspended sentences.

He said it would be "a gross invasion of judicial independence" to remove that option.

Police prosecutor Dale Henry had urged Mr Alsop to impose an immediate jail term of 12-18 months with a six-month minimum.

Sen-Constable Henry said suspended sentences were meant to be a last chance for an offender to be law-abiding, but Eastwood had "had her two last chances".

"Denunciation, as a specific deterrent, should take precedence over rehabilitation in this case," he told Mr Alsop.

"The defendant needs to be sent a message that the court will not tolerate repeated drunken, reckless behaviour that puts young children at risk."

Defence barrister John Verhoeven said Eastwood had consumed alcohol only once in the past 13 months and was "clearly in the process of overcoming what was a chronic alcohol situation".

Boys face court accused of lighting fire on Black Saturday

Killer blaze charges

TWO boys accused of starting a killer Black Saturday blaze have been freed on bail.

As bushfires raced across the state, killing 173 people, the pair taunted emergency services with threatening and sexually explicit prank calls, police told a court yesterday.

One of the boys was just 13 at the time of the Bendigo fire that killed Kevin "Mick" Kane, 48, almost a year ago.

The teen and his mate, 14, face more than 150 charges,

Elissa Hunt

including arson causing death.

The Bendigo fire destroyed more than 60 homes as well as businesses, sheds, machinery, cars and other property worth more than \$23 million.

Mr Kane, who used a walking stick, died at his Long Gully home despite desperate attempts by relatives to drag him clear of the inferno.

A Children's Court heard the boys started the fire in a dry creek bed near a local quarry

and watched as it took hold, about 3pm on February 7.

Hours later, when they are said to have returned to look at the fire, they were seen by a witness. By then the fire was so fierce they had to retreat.

Police later stopped the boys at a roadblock. They are accused of lying about their whereabouts, and denied involvement.

The court heard phone intercepts and listening devices were used to investigate the pair. A detective told the court the boys used a mobile phone

to make 55 calls to 000 from January 29 to March 26, threatening operators and harassing them with obscene comments.

They made a call on Black Saturday and several more in the two days after, it is alleged.

Police did not oppose bail, on strict conditions that include a curfew and constant supervision.

The court was told the younger boy was a cannabis user from a broken home who had regularly been seen on the street alone late at night.

He was often left by his

father to fend for himself with little food and no clean clothes, the court heard.

Judge Paul Grant said the boy had had a difficult life and needed proper support and supervision. His age and lack of prior convictions meant he should be released on bail, on strict terms.

The boy has been banned from bushland and from using or possessing lighters, matches or any source of ignition as part of his bail conditions.

Both teenagers will appear in court again in May.

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