



Recovering: Mt Roskill teen Inia Liufau was treated for burns at Middlemore Hospital after he caught a firework that was thrown at him.

Photo: JASON OXENHAM

Fireworks folly

By Rhiannon Horrell

AN ACT of stupidity by a group of Mt Roskill students has left 18-year-old Inia Liufau with scars for life.

On November 11 last year Inia and his friends were walking across the field of Mt Roskill Grammar School. Another group of students, unknown to Inia, were also crossing the field while playing with fireworks.

"Someone chucked it – I saw it coming and caught it," he says. "I heard my mates say: 'Something is coming.'"

As a rugby player, Inia's reflex was to catch the firework that was thrown.

But when it went off he severely injured his left hand.

"The muscle was hanging out – it was dead muscle," he says.

Inia was taken to Auckland Hospital and transferred to Middlemore later that night.

Two months on, the Mt Roskill teenager has been left with two scars across his palm and he wears a support bandage over his hand.

"I have to stretch it for the muscle to grow," he says.

The accident is frustrating for him because he hasn't used fireworks since he was 11.

"I find it boring," he says. "I didn't even have fireworks."

He says the group of students responsible for the accident came to his house while he was in hospital to see if he was all right.

Middlemore burns surgeon Amber Moazzam treated Inia after the accident.

"It was an open laceration of the thumb and the mus-

cles were hanging out. Luckily he didn't damage any of the bones in his hand. When he came in I was a bit worried that he had lost a lot of soft tissue."

Mr Moazzam says staff discovered that of two blood vessels damaged, one was still working.

"He lost 70 percent of the muscle – it's quite an important muscle. It could have been worse – he could have lost his thumb or index finger."

He says the injury may mean stiffness and reduced

function in Inia's hand.

Mr Moazzam says sparklers aren't too bad but fireworks that shoot out and have the possibility of falling over from a stand are the most dangerous.

Auckland Burn Support Group president George Stephens says it is sad to hear stories like Inia's.

"One of the aspects that the Fire Service has been promoting is no firework sales to the public. There is a minority that acts irresponsibly and as a consequence an innocent victim suffers."

He hopes the community will support public fireworks displays instead.

Mr Stephens says in 2009 there was a reduction in firework importation and he believes this year the trend will continue.

"We don't want to take all the fun out of life. But by the same token there are consequences and safer, cheaper alternatives."

Inia intends playing rugby again when the season starts in April and plans to join the police in the March intake.

Come in with family or friends and take advantage of these great deals!

Eye test

\$29*

2 pairs of glasses

\$199

from frames + stock lenses

kidz go free!

*Community Services card required



MOBILE OPTICIAN

(09) 836 43 66

4339 Great North Rd, Glendene

share this deal with your friend!

(09) 63 63 63 9

109 Trafalgar St, Onehunga

