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## Canberra mum and newborn burned in 'horrific' house fire

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Laura Hunter was too horrified by the sight of a blue flame as it licked her newborn baby's forehead to think about the fire that had engulfed her own body.

Ms Hunter, of Amaroo, and her nine-week-old daughter Molly suffered horrific burns when a blaze tore through her sister's home on the NSW mid-north coast on April 17.

The women lit candles on the deck and were enjoying a girls' night at the North Arm Cove house when Ms Hunter's sister Paula added fuel to a decorative ethanol burner and it erupted in flames.

"I just remember catching fire and I looked down and Molly was on fire, there was a blue flame on her head," Ms Hunter said.

"I couldn't focus because I was on fire, my clothes were on fire and my hair was on fire. It was just heat all over my body."

Emergency services arrived to put out the blaze and rushed the three to hospital as the house burned to the ground.

Molly was flown to The Children's Hospital at Westmead and given two small skin grafts for burns to her left arm and leg. The flames had singed her tiny eyelashes.

Ms Hunter was airlifted to Royal North Shore Hospital where she spent nearly five days in intensive care with burns to 35 per cent of her body.

She endured four surgeries to take skin from her back and legs to graft over burns which covered her left side except her face and breast.

### 'I've just got to keep fighting'

The mother-of-two described the blaze as "horrific" and said memories were dim because her body seemed to shut down as a way of handling the pain.

"It's been a really yucky, up and down time and I don't wish it upon anyone. It just happened so quickly."

To be separated from her newborn for nearly five weeks was devastating.

"She giggles now and I missed that. It's horrible, it's not a nice feeling to miss out on that.

"But I'm here and I've just got to keep fighting. I just want to go home and be a mum again."

Ms Hunter was released from hospital this week but will undergo physiotherapy for months and must wear a full body compression suit for 23 hours a day for a year.

Molly, who has also left hospital, was "an absolute trooper".

"She's laughing, she's crying, she's acting like a normal baby."

Ms Hunter's friend launched an online fund-raising page and auction to help the family meet the costs of medical treatment and accommodation in Sydney.

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So far more than \$6000 has been donated to help Ms Hunter, her partner, their 6-year-old daughter and Molly get back on their feet.

The incident prompted Ms Hunter to call for more awareness of the dangers the decorative ethanol burners could pose.

"They should be banned, or at least have more of a warning."

*This story was found at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/canberra-mum-and-newborn-burned-in-horrific-house-fire-20150531-gh9b3m.html>*