

# Polar rescue dash

By NIKKI PROTYNIAK

INTERNATIONAL rescue crews are racing against time to save a Melbourne man trapped in ice after he plunged down a crevasse at Antarctica two days ago.

Peter Bland, 32, is believed to be seriously injured after his fall while trekking across the icy wasteland with fellow Melbourne Jay Watson, also 32.

Chilean and Argentinian rescue teams have tried to reach the former Melbourne Grammar students at least four times since the accident, but bad weather has forced them back each time.

The old boarding school chums were attempting a world-first crossing of the Antarctic peninsula, from east to west, when disaster struck. They are believed to be trapped, in sub-zero temperatures, about 8km from Charlotte Bay.

Crew members from Australian yacht *Tooluka* dropped the men off just after New Year and were due to collect them yesterday.

The crew trekked for 40 hours to reach the pair when they failed to make the rendezvous, but have no way of getting them out because of Mr Bland's injuries.

Speaking from her Gisborne home last night, Julia Bland told the *Herald Sun* she was hoping desperately that her husband, who had had open heart surgery twice, would be saved.

"I'm very worried. I just don't know what's going on," a distraught Mrs Bland said. "All I know is that he's been involved in an icefall.

"As to what's actually occurred, no one's really sure at the moment. You go to bed and you don't know if he's going to be all right and that's the worst thing.

"I'm hoping it's only a broken leg. I know he's very, very fit, but it's very, very cold out there."

Mrs Bland and the couple's 10-month-old daughter, Olivia,



**Trapped:** crews are racing to save Peter Bland from sub-zero conditions.

are preparing to make an emergency dash across the world to be by Mr Bland's side as soon as he is freed from the ice.

"As soon as I hear, we'll be on that plane," she said.

The disaster comes only two days after 10 Australians became stuck in pack ice at the Antarctic while on board the *Spirit of Sydney* yacht.

Mrs Bland said her heart stopped when she heard about the *Sydney's* troubles.

"I heard 'Antarctic' and 'trapped' and thought my night-

mare had come true. It didn't then but it has now," she said.

Oddly, Mr Brand was on board the *Sydney* when it foundered in the same freezing waters almost five years ago. He dove into the icy sea three times without scuba gear to cut a rope that had snagged on the propeller.

The Gisborne commodity broker is a veteran of rough journeys and icy conditions. In 1998 he suffered frostbite while becoming the first Australian to walk 600km from Canada's Resolute Bay to the north magnetic pole.

Herald Sun, Monday, February 5, 2001

## Ice man continues his fight for life

By NIKKI PROTYNIAK

ADVENTURER Peter Bland is in a critical condition after being freed from the Antarctic crevasse that held him prisoner in freezing conditions for almost 40 hours.

The Gisborne man, who was vying to be the first person to cross the Antarctic Peninsula from east to west, is believed to be fighting for his life in a Chilean hospital.

Mr Bland has a horror list of injuries including four broken ribs, a fractured skull, dislocated hip and possible frostbite.

His wife Julia and baby daughter Olivia yesterday left Australia for Punta Arenas to be with him.

Family friend Nerida



**Peter Bland**

believed Mr Bland, 32, had been rescued.

"It's a miracle Peter's alive. The crevasse was very, very deep," Ms Crane said.

"Everyone involved risked their lives to save him. A doctor has seen him but he's definitely not in the all-clear yet. There are some real worries."

took three attempts to winch Mr Bland to safety on Saturday, almost two days after an avalanche sent him plummeting into the crevasse.

The Peruvian air force was called in to fly the battered adventurer from an Antarctic base camp to Chile yesterday after a camp doctor ordered an emergency evacuation.

The disaster happened as Mr Bland and his trekking partner, Jay Watson, both former Melbourne Grammar students, were less than 8km from the end of their journey.

Mr Watson resumed the trek to complete the world's first unsupported crossing of the Antarctic

Herald Sun, Saturday, February 3, 2001

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## Polar rescue dash

AS one Antarctic adventure was all but over for a Gisborne man yesterday, another intrepid Victorian was planning an assault on the southern continent.

Peter Bland, 32, who had been trying to cross Antarctica, was seriously injured in an ice fall just 8km from the end of his journey.

Mr Bland is believed to be in a stable condition but rescue attempts have been hampered by bad weather.

Natimuk adventurer Brigitte Muir has announced a daring plan to become the first woman to find a new route across Antarctica to the South Pole.

Her secret route will be 1800km long. Ms Muir was the first Australian woman to reach the peak of Mt Everest.

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