The chance to take on Everest

Ex-Cessnock man leads trip for charity

BY **SAGE SWINTON**

IT'S one of the world's most popular bucket list items and this autumn it's being offered by a former Cessnock man.

Adventurer Gavin Vickers will lead an expedition to Everest Base Camp and local residents are being invited to take part.

The trip is all in the name of Hunter charity the Umbrella Foundation Australia, which raises money for Nepal to fund projects such as building schools, buying women's sanitary items and rescuing trafficked children.

Mr Vickers, an Umbrella Foundation Australia patron, has hiked to Everest Base Camp five times and made it to the top of the beast. He's also climbed to peaks above 8000 metres three times.

The expedition leader said he had no travel plans this autumn so when Umbrella Foundation Australia chairperson Linda Harwood asked him about running a trip, he jumped at the chance.

"They do such good work," Mr Vickers said. "And I can use my skills to help."

Mr Vickers said he loved introducing people to Nepal, which he said was like his "second home".

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>
> **Gavin Vickers**

"It's a very special part of the world," he said. "I've been there nine times. The people really make it for me.

"It's one of the poorest countries in the world, so it just really makes you feel good to give back.

"It makes me thank my lucky stars every day that I can do things here like go to the tap and drink the water without getting sick."

The 17-day trip in April and May involves the base camp trek as well as the opportunity to attend an Anzac Day ceremony at the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu.

Mr Vickers said while base camp was "quite a difficult trek" due to the high altitudes, he encouraged anyone to take part.

He said he was also happy to advise participants how to best prepare, but said there was no hard and fast approach.

"You just have to be consistent with your training, then everything else falls into place," he said.

"The fitter you are the more you enjoy the trip. But we go very slowly. We have acclimatisation days. On rest days we go up higher then come back down to sleep."

All profits from the trip will go to the Umbrella Foundation Australia. For details, visit the Umbrella Foundation Australia website.



OPPORTUNITY: Adventurer Gavin Vickers will lead a charity trip to Everest Base Camp next month and local residents are being invited to take part.

Pilot injures neck in Pokolbin plane crash

A MAN whose aircraft crashed at a Pokolbin winery appears to have escaped serious injury, a NSW Ambulance spokesperson said.

Around 3.30pm on Monday, paramedics were called to an aircraft accident at De Bortoli Winery, the spokesperson said.

Five crews and a helicopter with a specialist medical crew attended.

"Initial reports were that the plane crashed into a vineyard," the spokesperson said. "One person was on board, a 24-year-old man."

The spokesperson said there was a bit of damage to the aircraft "but he seems to have come out of it OK, with a bit of neck pain".

The man was transported to John Hunter Hospital in a serious but stable condition.

De Bortoli assistant manager Robert Travers said the aircraft had clipped a tree on the property and then crashed.

"On take off it has clipped a tree, which is about 15 to 20 metres away from our cellar door. There's a lot of debris on the ground there," Mr Travers said. "And then he has continued on another 100 metres, and crashed between two of our shiraz blocks in the vineyard. It could have been a lot worse."

Mr Travers said no one was hurt at the winery, and no fruit had been damaged either.

"There's a good 15 metre gap between the two blocks and he has gone right in the middle. All the fruit was picked two weeks ago. Even if he did hit them it would not have been an issue."

Mr Travers said that, despite the winery's proximity to Cessnock airport, he had not heard of planes crashing on the property before.

"I've been here 11 and a half years and we are astounded it's not happened before," Mr Travers said.

"We are directly under the flight path. We are about 300 metres from the end of the runway."

