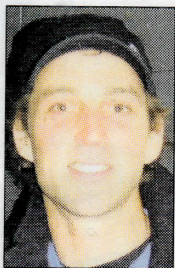


# Cave man leaves his home

By **CHRISTINA MCDONALD**

INSTEAD of an easy slide out of the snow cave which had been his home for the past month, Blair Whitaker and two guests spent more than two hours digging themselves out yesterday on Mr Whitaker's final morning in the cave.

After earlier saying he would have preferred more snow to strengthen his icy home on the Remarkables skifield, the "perfect storm" arrived in his last days there.



**Blair Whitaker**

Yesterday's spring snowstorm left more than 2m of snow between Mr Whitaker and the outside world.

"We started digging about 8.30 this morning and broke out probably around 11," he said ruefully.

Mr Whitaker had been living in the snow cave since August 11 as a fundraiser for avalanche dogs and, on the final night, he was joined by an auction winner and a friend who was making a film of the month-long experience.

"It was definitely the biggest [snowfall]. I've been snowed in a couple of times ... but last night was definitely the most."

During the month, he did not leave the skifield, spending the majority of his time in and around the snow cave, but shortly after coming down from the mountain yesterday he was looking forward to tucking into "half a kilo of steak".

"My stomach might have shrunk but I think I have probably eaten quite well because people kept giving me treats."

His month-long cave stint raised over \$10,000 for Aspiring Avalanche Dogs and since Mr Whitaker had hoped to raise double that figure, he was holding a party last night at Subculture nightclub, where he would auction donated outdoor gear.

And after a month sleeping in a sleeping bag, he was looking forward to using a proper bed again.