

Overdue bushwalker found in cave

By Louise Stephenson

A 36-year-old New South Wales bushwalker, who had been reported overdue on a one-day walk in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, was found safe and well late last night in a cave.

Robert Bignall, of Abermaine, was reported missing to police at 12.55 p.m. yesterday by a National Parks and Wildlife ranger.

Members of the North-West Police District Search and Rescue Squad and North-West regional officers of the State Emergency Service, led by Sgt M. Hindrum, arrived at the foot of the mountain at 4.15 p.m.

A party of six police officers and a ranger made an initial search of low-lying areas before dark but no trace of the man was found.

A further search of the mountain summit was made later in the night by the head ranger of the park, Mr Oliver Vaughan, and the staff officer of the North-West region of the S.E.S., Mr Paul Darby.

Voice contact was made with the missing man at 10.45 p.m. and the searchers found him in a nearby cave.

The man was weak from lack of food but was able to walk out after receiving nourishment.

The party was expected to arrive at the ranger's hut at dawn.

Bignall had called at the ranger's duty office on Tuesday morning and detailed the route he intended to take. The 6 km route would normally take about four hours. There was some confusion about Bignall's planned return but police inquiries yesterday revealed he was booked on a flight from Launceston at 10 a.m. yesterday.



Searchers set off down the Ballroom Forest track. Low cloud pictured on Cradle Mt made the search difficult.

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FORECAST — N.W.: Fine, Mild. West: Early Showers. (See Page 28).

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