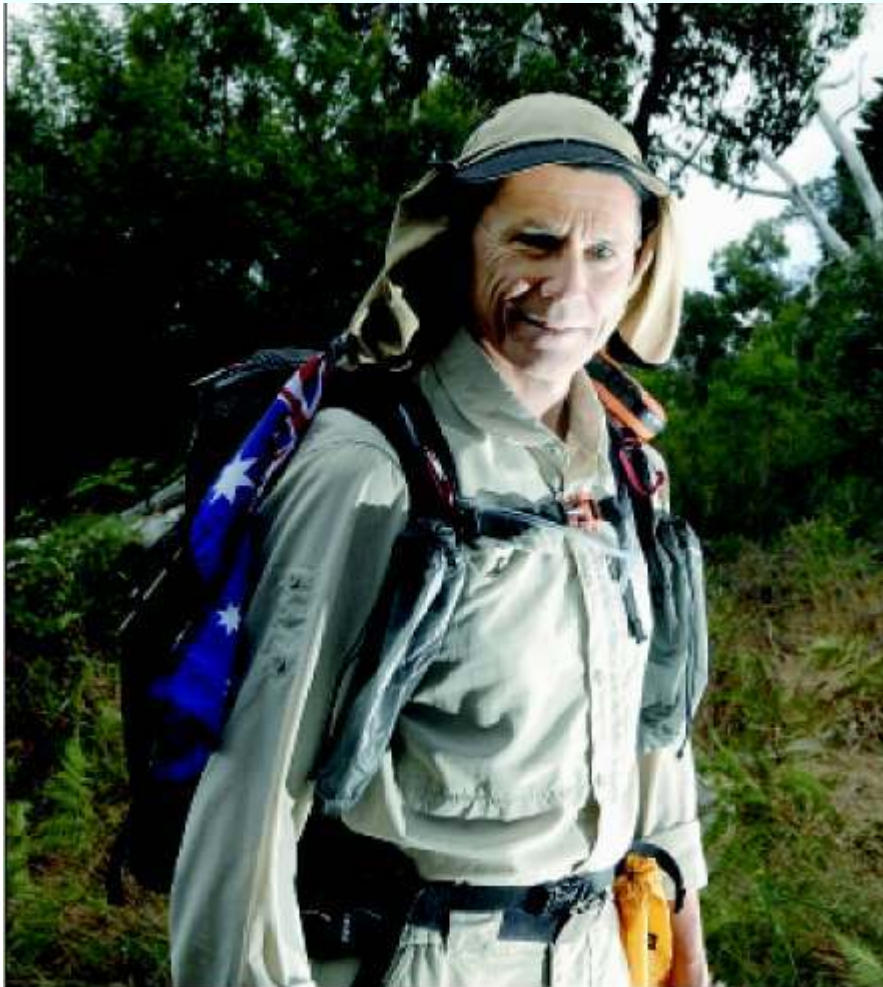




Diabetic's sandy trek

Hiker plans 250km walk through the Sahara to raise cash for research



People | Louise Clifton-Evans

BEACONSFIELD hiker Alex Williams has a life-threatening illness but is planning a gruelling trek next month through the Sahara.

Mr Williams is in training and frequently walks 62km at a stretch, often over challenging terrain.

The 52-year-old has Type 1 diabetes but spends about 18 hours a month hiking around Wilsons Prom in preparation for his 250km Sahara walk.

Mr Williams says his goal is to raise \$100,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

"People think I am mad to walk in the Sahara with my illness," Mr Williams said.

"But I enjoy the challenge and the opportunity to promote a greater understanding between Type 1 diabetes, which is an auto-immune disease, and Type 2, which is a lifestyle illness."

The computer technician worked in Saudi Arabia for five years before returning to Australia in 2000.

He said although he had woken up in hospital several times after having major hypoglycaemic episodes caused by low blood sugar levels, he had learned to manage the disease and maximise his enjoyment of life.

Mr Williams has walked 5000km over the past two years in preparation for the seven-day trek, during which he will carry a 14kg pack with enough food to provide him with 14,000 calories a day.

Alex Williams will walk 250km through the Sahara to raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Picture: JANE OLLERENSHAW. N36BL209