

Frantic search for survivors in ravaged Chile

RESCUE teams were hunting for survivors after one of the largest earthquakes on record killed at least 300 people in Chile and triggered the biggest tsunami warning in history.



In an address to the nation, President Michelle Bachelet said 2 million Chileans had been affected but, after touring the worst-hit areas by plane, she found it hard to spell out the magnitude of the disaster.

"We're talking about a tragedy," Ms Bachelet said. She declared six of Chile's 15 regions catastrophe zones in the aftermath of the 8.8-magnitude quake.

Highways in the nation of 16 million were sliced to pieces, bridges collapsed and buildings imploded as the earthquake hit before dawn on Saturday about 325 kilometres south-west of the capital, Santiago.

Officials said at least 300 people had been killed but the death toll was expected to rise, particularly around Concepcion, Chile's second-largest city, which is roughly 110 kilometres from the quake centre.

There, cars were mangled and upended on streets lit-

tered with telephone and power cables. The quake toppled old and new construction, despite the country's strict earthquake codes. A new 15-storey apartment building fell, while an older, biochemical lab at the University of Concepcion caught fire.

Waves of more than two metres crashed into the coast after the quake struck at 3.34am and tore out into the Pacific, killing at least five people in the remote Robinson Crusoe Islands.

In the port of Talcahuano, trawlers were sent shooting inland to the town square where they were oddly marooned next to abandoned cars. About 50 countries and territories around the Pacific braced for giant waves, a little over five years after the Indian Ocean tsunami that killed more than 220,000 people.

All beaches in NSW and southern Queensland were closed and there was a 50-



centimetre rise in sea level at Norfolk Island.

But the waves proved weaker than feared.

In Hawaii, a tsunami alert led to the evacuation of nearly 100,000 residents and tourists and emptied beaches.

More than 70,000 people fled vulnerable coastal areas of Japan where there was some flooding. "Please do not approach the coast at any cost," the Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama, said.



The US President, Barack Obama, said the nation "stands ready to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts, and we have resources that are positioned to deploy should the Chilean government ask for our help".

Despite officials saying up to 1.5 million homes could be affected, Chile's Foreign Minister, Mariano Fernandez, asked countries that had offered help to wait until local authorities could assess emergency needs.

Chile does not want "aid from anywhere to be a distraction" from disaster relief, Mr Fernandez said, adding: "Any aid that arrives without having been determined to be needed really helps very little."

Article from SMH



Vasili's garden tips spruce up festa

TOP gardening tips from the backyard of celebrity gardener Vasili Kanidiaelis was up for grabs in Moonee Ponds on Sunday.

As part of the Moonee Valley Festival, he hosted a sustainable gardening workshop at the Enviro Hub at Queens Park on Sunday from noon to 3pm. Just like on his Channel 31 TV show Vasili's Garden, showed budding greenthumbs how to create self-sufficient gardens, propagate and graft plant cuttings.

"I'll be teaching traditional methods of gardening, just like our ancestors used," Vasili, 40, said.

"It's all about sustainable practises, using traditional plant varieties, organics and traditional plant varieties."

Those who wanted to polish up their culinary skills could attend cooking demonstrations from Moonee Ponds eateries The Boathouse and Philhellene Greek restaurant, Tobie Puttock of Fifteen, The Apprentice's Andrew Morello and the Country Women's Association. Jam-packed with free, family fun, the two-day festival started on Saturday with The Henley on Maribyrnong Rowing Regatta from 10am to 4pm, and a festa at Queens Park on Sunday from 10am-5.30pm.

Activities included carnival rides, stalls, youth hub, and live music by The Bamboos, the Mighty buZZniks and Gee Whiz Kidz.

Art is all Greek to Castle Hill Art Society

When some members of Castle Hill Art Society hear the line "it's all Greek to me", they simply smile.

They enjoyed a Greek sojourn last September when they embarked on a painting trip led by well-known Hills artist and tutor Angelika Erbsland.

The fruits of their labours are about to go on show at The White House Gallery, 6 McMullen Ave, Castle Hill, this month.

A Greek Odyssey opens on Friday at 7pm with free entry and runs until March 28.

There is a chance to meet the artists between 1pm and 4pm on March 7.

Erbsland has donated a painting to be raffled with tickets on sale throughout the exhibition.

All proceeds from the raffle will go to The Holly Legge Memorial Scholarship for disadvantaged young art students. Inquiries: 9899 3179 (answering machine) or <http://www.castlehillartsociety.org.au>



Greek Australian Skier Lydia Lassila Wins Gold in Winter Olympics

Lydia Lassila laid on the snow in Turin four years ago with her left knee shattered while her Olympic hopes faded away. She didn't give up, although it would have been easy. Four years later she won the gold medal in aerial skiing. Lassila took home the gold in the aerials, Australia's second gold medal win, after snowboarder Torah Bright won gold in the half pipe, incidentally also at Cypress Mountain. At the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Lassila won gold in the aerials, getting Australia's second gold medal for the games after snowboarder Torah Bright won gold in the half pipe, incidentally also at Cypress Mountain. This medal was also the second gold medal for an Australian in the aerials at all Winter Olympic Games, after Alisa Camplin in 2002. As world number one there was a lot of pressure and hype from the Australian press for Lydia to do well. She was in second position after the first jump of the final, before posting the highest scoring second round jump. The leader after the first jump, Xu Mengtao, had the last jump, but scored more than 25 points below Lassila's second jump to fall down the rankings into sixth, due to a failed landing. Lassila had a combined score of 214.74, beating second placed Li Nina on 207.23 points. Australian team-mates Jacqui Cooper and Elizabeth Gardner finished 5th with 194.29 and 12th with 86.70 respectively. She ended the 2007/08 season ranked second on the World Cup standings, and then went on to win her first World Cup title in the following 2008/09 season.