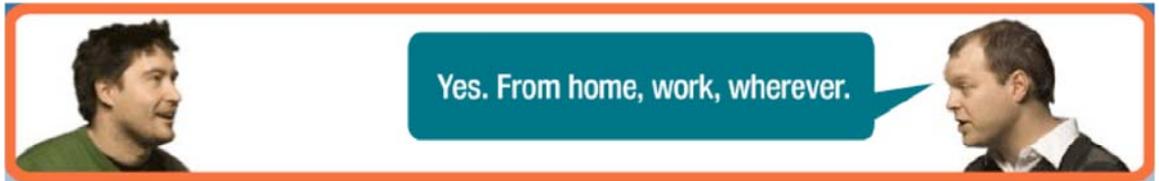




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Pair plunge 20m from bush swing

By HELEN MURDOCH - The Press | Tuesday, 16 October 2007

A father watched in horror as his two adult children plummeted from a rope swing into dense bush in the Marlborough Sounds.

"To see the kids free-falling was a gut-wrenching experience. I thought 'My God, are they going to be all right?'" Geoff Cameron, of Nelson, said yesterday.

Cameron, his wife, and their two children, Mark, 25, and Jarnia, 28, were staying with friends in their bach south of Cissy Bay, near French Pass, for a long-overdue reunion, when the accident happened on Sunday afternoon.

Jarnia had travelled from Auckland to see her brother, who was in New Zealand visiting family before heading to Perth.

Members of the two families had been taking turns on a rope that swung over steep bush above the bay.

Jarnia was having her last swing of the afternoon and Mark was at the take-off point, an old stump, to help her back to firm footing.

Mark Cameron said he was standing on the stump and grabbed the rope as his sister came in, but the return momentum carried them both out above the bush.

Unable to hold on, he slipped and the pair fell 5m on to the almost vertical face, rolling another 15m down the

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HELEN MURDOCH/The Press

LUCKY ESCAPE: Mark Cameron, who was injured after plunging from a bush swing, with his father Geoff in Nelson Hospital.

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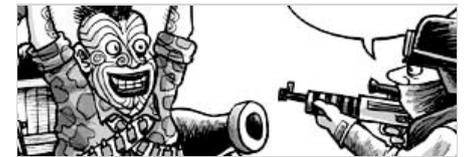
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hill before coming to rest under an old branch. Cameron landed on the top of his spine, compressing a vertebra, while his sister suffered rib and possible internal injuries.

The pair were unconscious and going into shock when family members arrived.

"I ran down the hill so fast to see them both lying there groaning. My main concern was their spines, and I was adamant they were not going to be moved," Geoff Cameron said.

The Summit Rescue Helicopter arrived within an hour, but first the pair had to be moved to a clear area before they could be winched to safety.

Rescuers and family members spent about two hours keeping the pair immobilised on stretchers, cutting steps into the steep hill and relaying the siblings 30m up the hill.

"I was impressed by the response time and the professionalism of the rescue team," Geoff Cameron said.

Pilot and base manager Tim Douglas-Clifford was part of the rescue team, helping take the pair from the steep terrain.

The pair were recovering in Nelson Hospital last night.

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