

Well, he had a lucky escape

BRIGID O'CONNELL

A MAN who fell eight metres down a water-filled well in the state's northeast has been rescued unhurt.

The 59-year-old Milawa man was standing on the concrete lid of the well to fix a windmill when it broke and he fell in about 11.30am yesterday.

The 91cm-wide well had about 2.5m of water at the bottom.

But the man managed to wedge himself to keep his head above water.

Wangaratta CFA senior station officer David Baker said the man's wife heard his calls for help and threw a rope down before calling emergency services to their Lauriston Ave home.

Mr Baker said they first secured him with a rescue harness while they waited for special confined rescue equipment to arrive from Wodonga.

He said while the man wasn't injured, he was at high risk of hypothermia and they decided not to wait for the other equipment and pull him out quickly themselves.

The man was taken to the Wangaratta District Base Hospital for observation.

Vic strict on indoor tan bans

ROBYN RILEY

VICTORIA is leading the way in helping reduce melanoma deaths with some of the toughest indoor tanning laws in the world.

Now, other countries are being urged to follow its example after it was revealed the use of sunbeds led to more than 3000 cases of skin cancer in Europe last summer.

In a report published in the *British Medical Journal*, researchers claimed those who used sunbeds were 20 per cent more at risk of developing skin cancer.

Victoria's solarium laws were toughened up after the death in 2007 of anti-solarium campaigner Clare Oliver. Ms Oliver shared her story in the weeks before her death from melanoma to urge people not to die for a tan.

In 2008, legislation was introduced in Victoria banning the use of solariums for those under 18.

Last week researchers from the International Prevention Research Institute in France and the European Institute of Oncology in Italy called for similar tough sunbed regulations in Europe.

The team wants laws where tanning under 18 is restricted and unsupervised tanning in salons banned.

This is a story that will warm your heart. It's who is severely autistic. It's the story of



Left to languish: Under "automatic seclusion", Luke (above and below) was confined to "Luke's area" for almost 24 hours of every day. Luke's area comprised a living area, bathroom (with bath, shower, wash basin and toilet) and a bedroom.



SAVING

ASH Werner well remembers the first time he met Luke Modra. Luke was screaming. His clothes were shredded.

His hair was wild with dreadlocks made from ripped towels tied to his hair. "He scared the crap out of me to be honest," Ash says.

The Deniliquin lad, with biceps seemingly bigger than his thighs, had been trained in machinegun operations and fast roping helicopters to navy ships.

He had not been trained to care for someone who communicated through punching windows and ripping up his own clothes.

So Ash used his instincts — slowly gaining trust by giving trust, figuring he would treat Luke just as he himself would want to be treated.

And it worked. The

BRIGID O'CONNELL

23-year-olds have become best mates.

Their relationship is the catalyst for Luke's transformation from one of the most traumatised and severely autistic people in Victoria into a calm, contented young man.

UNTIL 2009, Luke seemed doomed to a life of misery.

His muddled way of grasping the world around him had convinced state authorities that languishing in prison-like conditions for 24 hours a day was the only way he could be managed.

He lived in shared supported accommodation run by the Department of Human Services.

Human contact was minimal.

Food was delivered without interaction.

A purpose-built cage

separated him from carers when he went outside.

Luke barely spoke. He covered his head for most of the day with clothes he had torn off.

His parents, Mark and Ellen, anguished over his conditions.

There had to be a kinder way and they scoured the world for options.

It was clear from Luke's self-destructive behaviour he would not survive much past his 21st birthday.

The Modras were exhausted and traumatised.

Ellen had been treated for breast cancer and they were grieving over the suicide of their daughter Hannah, 17, two years earlier.

Hope arrived in 2009 in the form of laidback country folk from a disability support agency in Deniliquin, New South Wales.

Among them was Ash Werner.