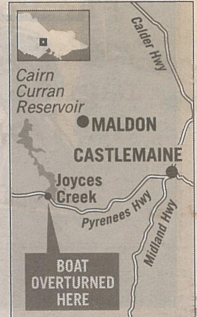


LAKE TRAGEDY

# Boy dead, two missing



**Hopes dim: Police scour the central Victorian reservoir for the two missing men (left) while a distraught man (below, left) is overcome at the search scene. Pictures: DAMIEN HORAN**



**DISTRAUGHT** mother Georgia Stavrou yesterday mourned her precious 6-year-old son Kyri, and wondered if her husband George would come home alive.

What had been planned as a father-son camping adventure for the opening of the duck season turned to tragedy when their boat capsized near Castlemaine, north-west of Melbourne.

The pair were in the small aluminium dingy with four of Mr Stavrou's friends.

All six were thrown into Cairn Curran Reservoir. It is believed none wore a life jacket.

Four of the party, including Kyri, were rescued just after 6am, but the youngster died after being pulled from the water.

Mr Stavrou, 38, was missing last night, along with friend Paul Athanasiadis.

The other men in the boat were Mr Athanasiadis's father, Ari, Harry Tsikkos and Mr Stavrou's nephew, Gary Stylianou.

Joe Dicicco, who pulled three of the men to safety, said he heard his friends' screams about 5.50am yesterday.

"The three-metre

By FELICITY DARGAN, SUE HEWITT and WAYNE JONES

boat was overloaded, carrying about 700kg in weight," he said.

He said the five adults were all wearing waders which would have weighed them down when the boat capsized.

"It's a death sentence in a boat," he said. "George would have been holding his son and the waders would have pulled him down — he did not have a chance."

Mr Dicicco and his brother, Steve, raced to the water when they heard the screams.

They rescued two men clinging to the overturned boat. The third man swam to the shore.

But the two missing friends and the little boy could not be seen.

Twenty minutes later Mr Dicicco found the youngster lying face down in the water.

Mr Dicicco said he took the boy in his arms and carried him ashore.

He said he tried to resuscitate the boy, but could not save him.

"I can still see the little boy now," he said.

An off-duty police officer, who was camped nearby and joined in the search, said: "It was a recipe for disaster. Six people in a three-metre boat is ridiculous. They were wearing waders,

they had their guns and they had three cases of shotgun cartridges (each weighing 22kg)."

A police spokesman said the underwater and shore search, involving about 50 people, was wound down about 5pm.

State Emergency Service boats will resume patrolling early this morning.

Relatives last night kept a vigil at the reservoir.

George Efthymiou, a relative of Mr Stavrou, said the Greek Cypriot community would be devastated.

He said Mr Stavrou, until a few years ago, was a popular Greek nightclub performer using the stage name of George Kyprios.

He said Mr Stavrou's father was preparing to fly from Cyprus to be with his family.

Speaking from her family's home in Kealba in the western suburbs, Mrs Stavrou, 33, said: "My darling angel Kyri ... he was so precious.

"It was his first excursion with his daddy."

The shocked mother said she could not contemplate life without her son and husband of 11 years.

The couple also has a two-year-old son, Eric.

"George and Kyri set off on Friday night after George closed his shop in Moonsee Ponds," Mrs Stavrou said.

"Kyri was excited because it was his first time camping with his dad.

"It was his first time away from his mum overnight and he found it so hard to leave me.

"They were going to come home about lunch time today because George said told me he couldn't stay away from

you for more than one night honey'. George went to the opening of last year's duck season.

"He was encouraged by his friends to go along this year and he didn't want to let them down.

"He was wearing waders. When the boat turned over they would have filled with water. They would be like lead.

"We just don't know. The police say he might have made it to the bank."