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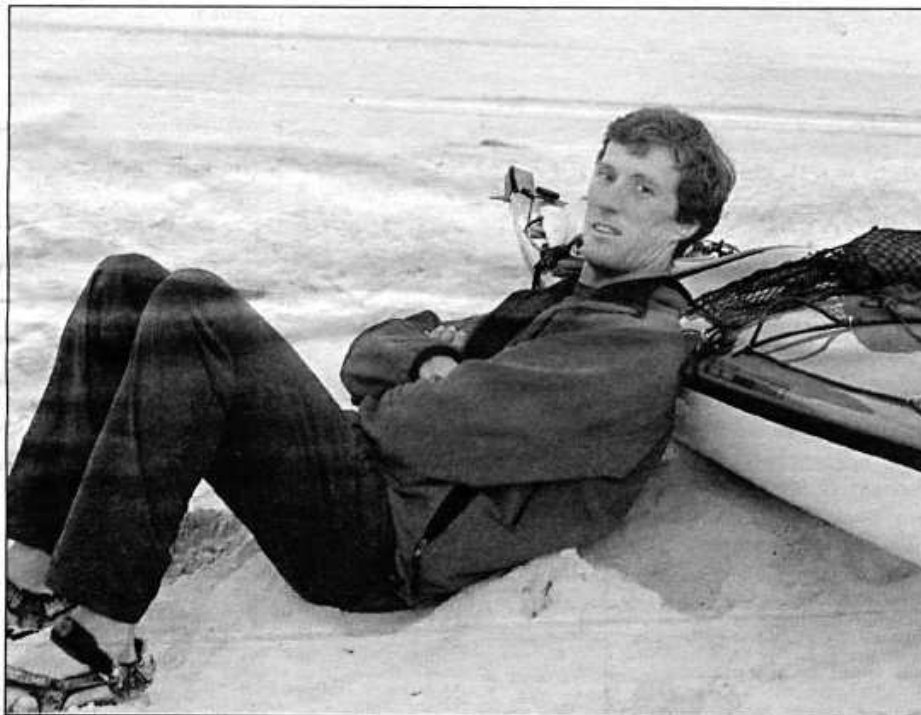
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**EPIC JOURNEY:** Bass Strait paddler Andrew McAuley, of NSW, rests at Boat Harbour Beach yesterday after his epic Bass Strait crossing. Picture: Tony Cross.

# Non-stop crossing of strait in kayak

By Aaron Oldaker

IN what is believed to be a first, a New South Wales man has paddled directly across Bass Strait from Victoria to Tasmania in a kayak.

Although Bass Strait crossings in small watercraft have been completed before, it is believed to be the first time a lone person in a kayak has made the 220-km journey without stopping at Bass Strait islands along the way.

Andrew McAuley, a 36-year-old computer expert, arrived at Boat Harbour Beach about 5.30 p.m. yesterday after leaving Wilsons Promontory about 6.30 a.m. on Thursday.

When asked why he did it, Mr McAuley said it was the experience itself that mattered.

He is already a veteran of a previous Bass Strait crossing in 2000, in which he paddled via

Flinders Is. with other kayakers.

He said being alone in a vast rolling ocean under the light of the stars and a glowing moon was simply "awesome".

"It's fantastic. How can I put it into words — it's so inspiring to be out there, the moon was so beautiful," he said.

As well as the beauty of the experience, the element of personal challenge involved was considerable.

"When you are out there like that alone, you definitely feel a lot of commitment," he said.

He navigated using a compass but carried a global positioning system as a back-up.

"I simply followed a compass bearing all the way," he said.

But it was not all smooth paddling.

Sometime in the middle of Thursday night, Mr McAuley capsized when he "nodded off".

"I was so tired," he said, but he managed to eskimo roll himself upright again.

Mr McAuley was in good spirits when he spoke to The Advocate last night, but was looking forward to getting some rest.

As he paddled into Boat Harbour yesterday, one local woman commented that he looked like he was either extremely old or had paddled a long way.

Last night Mr McAuley was the beneficiary of the hospitality of Flowerdale farmer Duncan Sadler, who approached Mr McAuley when he first arrived.

"I instantly knew he was not a local," Mr Sadler said.

"When he got off his boat he seemed very stiff."