



**ON THE SPOT** with Shireen Khalil

# Climbers on top of world

THEY saw, they climbed, they conquered.

After climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, which is the highest peak in Africa at 5895m, in just three days, Charmhaven's Shane Pophfer and his former military friend Darren Wise agreed it was time for a new challenge.

The pair recently returned from a five-week expedition to Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, which is the highest mountain in the western hemisphere, and Russia's Mount Elbrus.

Mr Pophfer, a father of three and former member of the 3rd Royal Australian Regiment or parachute regiment, didn't get to complete

Mount Aconcagua.

Instead he assisted in a rescue, by taking a woman back to ground after she fell.

Mr Wise, of Rhodes in Sydney, climbed both mountains, totalling 13,106 metres and together the men raised \$13,000 for The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

"Part of the reason in doing this was because my sister was killed by a drunk driver when she was 12 years old and I carry her photo in a locket up every mountain I climb," he said.

"There's a fair bit of sentiment attached to the children's hospital because that's where she stayed."

But the life-long friends adven-

ture started way before they even got to Argentina.

"Our plane was diverted to Chile because of an earthquake and we stayed in a hotel on the top floor with all the aftershocks, not even the doors would shut properly," Mr Wise said.

The next day they hopped on to a bus and despite the caved in roads and fallen bridges, arrived safely in the Mendoza province of Argentina 10 hours later.

"Because we arrived too late in our expedition we elevated too quickly to catch up and got altitude sickness - but we kept on going," Mr Wise said.



**Darren Wise and Shane Pophfer with Tianna Zilifia at The Children's Hospital, Westmead.**

Picture: ISABELLA LETTINI