



DIY dill shoots nail into brain

By Sue Hewitt
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BRAD Shorten admits he is a fool who is lucky to be alive.

He was skylarking with mates over a few beers and took what he thought was an empty nail gun and pointed it at his head.

The Victorian father of three fired a 3.2cm nail through his skull into his brain, just behind his temple.

A centimetre deeper and Mr Shorten, 33, could have been dead or paralysed.

The Sunbury bricklayer's labourer thought the firing mechanism had glanced his skin, leaving a small red dot, not realising the nail had been counter-sunk into his skull.

Mr Shorten said he had used the nail gun to install wall panelling in his home, but had turned off the compressor and removed the nail cartridge.

"My mates and I were talking about construction site accidents and taking your eye out with a nail gun, and I foolishly put the gun to my head and pulled the trigger," he said.

Although the compressor was disconnected, there was still pressure in the hose and it shot the nail into his skull.

"The nail was recessed into the skull, just like it is recessed into the timber," he said.

Mr Shorten had minimal pain, but started to feel light headed. His son, Nathan, 13, insisted on calling an ambulance.

"At hospital the pain got worse, and I was getting frustrated so I asked (nurses) for a pair of pliers to pull it out myself," he said.

That would have been the worst thing to do, according to Dr Kevin Siu, a Royal Melbourne Hospital neurosurgeon.

Dr Siu said there was a risk that removing the nail would cause a blood vessel to hemorrhage, possibly causing death.

The surgeon said had the nail been a centimetre deeper or had it been angled backwards, Mr Shorten risked a stroke, permanent brain damage or paralysis.

In a four-hour operation, a specialist team took a part of his skull off and removed the nail.

Mr Shorten said he was recovering from surgery and was expected to make a full recovery.

"I did a very stupid thing," he said.

The Victorian Injury Surveillance and Applied Research unit has found a growing trend of people, mainly men, injuring themselves doing stunts or tricks. In the six years to December 2002, 82 people suffered such injuries.

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