



EVENTFUL: Burnie eisteddfod stalwarts Barry and Dorothy Cunningham reveal why the events are still so popular. **Pages 22-23**

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TODAY

HOBART	LAUNCESTON	N-W COAST
13 Fine	14 Fine	14 Mainly fine

TOMORROW

HOBART	LAUNCESTON	N-W COAST
16 Fine	15 Fine	15 A little drizzle

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Knives out on

ONE STORY FOR THE RICH ...

By **HELEN KEMPTON**

A FORMER Tasmanian paramedic who works at the Phuket International Hospital expects a new marketing campaign will lure Tasmanian holiday-makers to Thailand for plastic surgery.

Peter Davison, who has worked at the Asian hospital for more than a decade, said much shorter waiting lists and much lower surgery costs made Thai plastic surgery packages an increasingly attractive option.

But Hobart plastic surgeon Chris Edwards has issued a warning to Tasmanians: plastic surgery is no holiday.

"The actual procedure may be cheaper but in this world you get what you pay for. It really is a significant gamble," Dr Edwards said.

Last year at Phuket International Hospital, plastic surgery was done on 25,000 foreigners including at least five Tasmanians who flew to Thailand specifically for surgery.

Two Tasmanian women, who did not want to be named, said they had no complications from their half-priced tummy tuck surgery in Phuket.

One acknowledged she had been dubious at the start.

"I was treated like royalty and would recommend plastic surgery in Thailand to others," she said.

The hospital, and specifically Peter Davison, is working with medical tourism company Destiny MediTravel on a marketing campaign designed to get more Tasmanians to sign up to plastic surgery packages.

Advertising has already been launched in Melbourne and Sydney with the Tasmania promotion due to start next week.

Destiny MediTravel owner Melanie Bawden said it cost just over \$5000 to have breast surgery performed in Thailand. This figure includes flights from Melbourne and 14 days' accommodation.

In Australia the same procedure would cost \$10,000 for the surgeon alone.

Then there is the waiting list factor.

Most prospective patients can get an appointment in the Phuket International Hospital within a week or two.

Dr Edwards conceded local plastic surgeons were struggling to keep up with demand and waiting lists were playing a part in the medical tourism trend.



LUXURY: The Phuket International Hospital offers cheap plastic surgery without the long wait.



TOUR OPERATOR: Melanie Bawden

gling to keep up with demand and waiting lists were playing a part in the medical tourism trend.

"The demand for plastic surgery has grown so much the fair dinkum surgeons can't keep up, even here in Australia," Dr Edwards said.

"The surgery [in other countries] may be cheaper but there is definitely more risk involved. Different countries have different rules. You simply do not

"Visit an exotic location and get your surgery done at a fraction of the cost of an operation at home"



FEARS: Chris Edwards

know who you will get."

Dr Edwards said he expected Tasmanian plastic surgeons would be dealing with the fallout if Tasmanians embraced the Thailand plastic surgery promotion.

"I have already seen a smattering of pretty messy results come through my doors," he said.

Ms Bawden said many of her customers were mothers who could be guaranteed rest and

relaxation if they had surgery done away from home.

"And why wouldn't you take up the chance to see something different, to visit an exotic location and get your surgery done at a fraction of the cost of an operation at home?" she said.

Ms Bawden said the Phuket International Hospital adhered to international accreditation standards.

"Most of the horror stories you hear come out of Malaysia," she said.

"The worst case I have heard of through the Thai facility was a patient who developed an infection when she got home. The infection was dealt with promptly through anti-biotics."

Dr Edwards said prospective patients needed to think about the quality of after-care and the quality of any implants used before they decided to go under the knife overseas.

Oil flow-on fuels \$2 petrol fear

PETROL is forecast to hit \$1.75 a litre this week and may soon reach \$2.

Because of a spike in the cost of crude oil this weekend, the NRMA motoring organisation says prices will jump by at least 10c a litre.

"We've seen prices in the mid-\$1.60s and you'll see it running up to the mid-\$1.70s this week," NRMA president Alan Evans said.

"I wouldn't rule out the possibility we're going to see \$2 a litre."

"I was in New Zealand [on Friday]. In Wellington, it was \$NZ2 a litre." Mr Evans said governments worldwide

must act to stop what he termed the manipulation of crude oil prices.

But the Federal Government and the Opposition remained divided yesterday on how to deal with the fuel cost crisis.

Labor said the surge in price emphasised the need for its FuelWatch scheme to be introduced without delay.

The Opposition insisted cutting excise was the only way to provide immediate relief on petrol prices.

The price of oil shot up \$US11 yesterday to a new high above \$US139 a barrel, and Australia

can expect the consequences to flow on to bowlers this week.

"For every dollar increase in the price of oil per barrel, you see a 1c increase in the price of petrol in Australia and it will have an impact," Assistant Treasurer

Chris Bowen said yesterday.

Mr Evans said governments needed to follow the lead of the US and the UK and hold inquiries into commodity speculators influencing the price of oil.

AAP

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