



STABBED: Michelle Smith.

## Pair held over death

TWO suspects have been arrested for the murder of Australian travel agent Michelle Smith, Thai police say.

Ms Smith, 60, of Perth, was stabbed in the chest as she was returning to her hotel on Wednesday.

Police spokesman Colonel Phirayuth Karajadee said two male suspects were in custody in the southern province of Chumphon.

They were to be brought to Phuket yesterday afternoon.

Thai authorities had given the case top priority and offered a reward for information leading to the arrest of the killers.

Ms Smith was stabbed during a botched purse-snatching attempt by two men on a motorcycle. They fled without taking anything. DPA

## Cheap fuel on its way

PETROL prices are forecast to drop by up to 5c a litre over the next 10 days after hitting a 17-month low last week, an economist says.

The average price of unleaded petrol fell 3c to a 17-month low of 138.6c in the week ending June 24, data from the Australian Institute of Petroleum showed.

As well, the national weekly metropolitan retail price was down 3.2c to 135.2c a litre, while the rural average petrol price dropped by 2.2c a litre to 145.7c a litre.

Commsec economist Savanth Sebastian said the drop in petrol prices has been "nothing short of dramatic" and even "more astounding" falls were ahead.

"Motorists are certainly in a happy place and will have further reason to celebrate in coming weeks," he said yesterday.

Melbourne had the cheapest unleaded petrol last week, at 128.c a litre, while Darwin remained the dearest, at 157.1c a litre. AAP

# All eyes on new aid to cataract surgery



MAPPED: Patient Bernard Kane uses the new cataract mapping machine. Pictures: Anita Jones

By JACQUI JONES  
Health Reporter

THE Hunter is embracing new technology to improve the accuracy of cataract surgery, one of the world's most performed procedures.

Hunter Valley Private Hospital is the first in NSW and the second in Australia to use the \$65,000 German-made SMI surgical guidance system.

The device is designed to enable more accurate positioning of lenses during eye surgery.

The machine takes a photo of the eye, which is saved on a USB data storage device.

This image is transferred to the operating theatre and used with real-time eye tracking to provide extremely accurate alignment of a lens.

Ophthalmologist David Manning said the machine took the guess work out of a critical part of a cataract operation, which had relied on making a manual pen mark on the eye.

After anaesthetic and once a patient lies down, the eye can rotate, causing misalignment of the lens.

Dr Manning said as cataract surgery was the most common operation in the world, people had expectations of perfect vision after the operation.



GUESS WORK GONE: Dr David Manning.

"What this operation is for is toric lenses, that's to correct astigmatism, which is one of the most common focus areas in the eye," he said.

Results of the procedure were already good, but eye surgeons were constantly striving for improvement.

Dr Manning said the new technology increased accuracy and enhanced outcomes.

Bernard Kane, 83, is among patients having surgery with the new technology.

The Waratah resident's vision had deteriorated since he found out five years ago that he had cataracts.

He said the operation was quick and painless and made his sight much clearer.

The new technology assisted the surgeon's accuracy, Mr Kane said.

### HOW IT WORKS

- Device takes a photo of patient's eye, looking straight ahead
- Image saved to USB data storage device
- Photo loaded on computer in operating theatre
- A second camera under the microscope takes a photo of the patient's eye while they are lying down
- The system lines up the

- two photos and the computer registers the position of the eye
- During the operation, the system tells the surgeon what axis the eye is sitting at or moving at
- Surgeon looks at the eye in real-time through the microscope
- The computer projects an image for the surgeon to line up the toric lens
- Surgeon implants lens

## Region's teachers to strike

By JACQUI JONES  
and AAP

HUNTER teachers will join their state colleagues to defy an order from the NSW Industrial Relations Commission and go on strike tomorrow.

The NSW Teachers Federation said yesterday the strike would go ahead because the state government had not changed its position on giving principals more power.

A spokeswoman said the federation did not know if defying the order would result in a penalty.

Federation Hunter organiser Fred Dumbrell said the region's teachers were joining the 24-hour strike and would hold a meeting at 11am.

Education Minister Adrian



FRED DUMBRELL



ADRIAN PICCOLI

day and they will cease peddling misinformation and undermining public education."

Justice Michael Walton in the commission yesterday ordered teachers not to strike, saying it wasn't in the public interest.

Teachers are upset at the government's Local Schools Local Decisions policy, which proposes to give principals the power to control 70 per cent of a school's budget and hire up to half of its staff.

"We're confident that the majority of parents will understand that we cannot stand by and allow our students' education to be cut by this government," federation deputy president Gary Zadkovich said.

Piccoli asked yesterday that all teachers across NSW abide by the commission's order to go to work tomorrow.

"Should the union executive continue to defy the order of the commission, the department will pursue penalties in the IRC," he said.

"If the union truly has students' best interests at heart they will not strike on Wednes-

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