

Patients 'wait too long' for breasts

By CAROLINE MARCUS

BREAST cancer survivors are waiting 12 months or longer for reconstructive surgery because plastic surgeons are preoccupied with high-paying cosmetic procedures, it was claimed last night.

Patients can undergo the surgery in a public hospital fully funded by Medicare but face long waiting lists, or through the private sector, where out-of-pocket expenses can total \$20,000.

Past president of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, Dr Russell Knudsen, said plastic surgeons were spending more time doing private cosmetic work than public because it "pays well".

"Some of the plastic surgeons don't give a lot of time to the public system," Dr Knudsen said.

"How can the waiting list go down if the plastics guys are spending most of the time in private land doing cosmetic stuff?"

Hospital budgeting was also a problem, with operating theatres scheduled for limited elective surgery, he said.

Professor John Boyages, author of the book *Breast Cancer: Taking Control* and breast oncologist at Macquarie University Hospital said patients were not being advised they could have their breasts reconstructed when they had a tumour removed.

"Some are told reconstruction might hide a recurrence," he said.

"That's nonsense."

Kate Bianco was told she had to wait at least another nine to 12 months to have her reconstruction.

The 42-year-old nursing assistant and mum-of-six from Muswellbrook, north of Sydney, said: "You think: 'I'm not doing this because I want to have bigger boobs'."

"I'm doing this because I've been maimed from the surgery."



Ben Johnson was almost cleaned up by a driver suspected of being drunk and speeding on Friday night

Picture: KATRINA BRIDGEFORD

'Drunk driver' smash could have killed me

By NICOLE MILLS

A TEENAGER is lucky to be alive after he was knocked to the ground when an alleged drunk and speeding driver smashed into the parked car he was standing in front of.

Electrical trade assistant Ben Johnson, 17, was making a phone call when a drunk driver mounted a traffic island on Carnoustie Circuit in North Lakes, Darwin, and slammed into his parked

Holden ute. Both cars then skidded forward and knocked him to the road.

"I heard (the car hit the traffic island) but by the time I turned around I could only move a metre or so and my ute still hit me," he said.

"It hit me with some force but I got back up. It was pretty full-on."

Mr Johnson was taken to hospital after the crash happened at 11pm on Friday but was released shortly after.

Watch Commander Garry Smith said a police car was driving past the scene on its way to an unrelated incident and had to swerve to avoid being hit by the car — which had already knocked down Mr Johnson.

"It veered across the road ... then mowed down a number of palm trees and T-boned another parked Holden utility," he said.

"As police were on the scene, they attended to the

driver who was unconscious with his foot jammed on the accelerator.

"Smoke started billowing from the engine and police thought the vehicle was going to catch on fire, so they had to force their way into the vehicle."

Sen Sgt Smith said police would not normally move a crash victim in case they had a spinal injury but decided to smash the window to get into the locked car and remove

the driver out of the possible danger area.

"It's one of those calls that you have to make as an emergency service provider," he said.

"Do you take the risk of the car going 'boom' or get the person out? Our guys took the second option."

Despite the smoke, the car did not explode.

The driver was taken to hospital and was in a stable condition last night.

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Born in Sri Lanka but Aussie first

A SRI Lankan-born pastor who started a radical political party wants Territorians to put an end to multiculturalism.

Rise Up Australia Party president Daniel Nalliah spoke at a campaign meeting in Darwin last night.

He said he wanted to raise awareness about protecting Australia's "Judeo-Christian heritage" and taking a stand against "political correctness".

Mr Nalliah — who has made headlines for calling Prime Minister Julia Gillard a heathen "living in sin" — said

immigrants must assimilate into the "Australian way of life".

"When you come here and say I want Islamic law — that's when we say, 'sorry you're in the wrong place'," he said.

"I was born in Sri Lanka but I am an Australian first."

Mr Nalliah said he liked the word "multiculturalism" when he first came to Australia because he believed it was designed to protect "people like me". "But I realised something wasn't right," he said.

Mr Nalliah spoke at the Lyons Community Centre.

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