

Senator Nick Xenophon back on track

INDEPENDENT Senator Nick Xenophon is recovering in a Sydney hospital after four-hour spinal fusion surgery. Senator Xenophon, 50, who cemented his popularity with media-savvy stunts, has not lost his sense of humour.

Despite the intense pain, he told of nurses remarking that another miracle had been performed after finding a spine in a politician.

"I now have a 10cm incision in my back, but I'd rather be knifed by a surgeon than by another pollie," he said.

Senator Xenophon suffered the chronic injury during a 2006 election

fundraiser while attempting a Zorba the Greek dance. Since then, he has had regular visits to physiotherapists, chiropractors and acupuncturists until the only option to relieve the searing pain was to fuse the L5-S1 vertebrae.

After the surgery and two days in intensive care, the operation appears to have been a success.

Already he is walking short distances, but must endure daily physiotherapy and hydrotherapy and wear a back brace for the next six weeks. He cannot travel yet, but expects to be back in Adelaide in the next fortnight.

The workaholic ex-lawyer is becoming

a regular in the operating theatre, having undergone life-saving heart surgery in 2002 and heart scares a few years later.

"I'm done with surgery . . . I think I've had my quota," he said.

"I'm starting to be a little like the bionic man.

"I've got titanium wiring in my chest . . . and I've got nuts and screws and plates in my back - so I'm worried about metal detectors at airports."

He mocks suggestions the latest health issue will slow his resolve which recently included opposing the Federal Government's emissions trading



scheme.

"The good news is this has kept me quiet for the past month," he said.

"The bad news is, now that I've had the surgery, I'll be an even bigger pain in the backside in Canberra."

(source: adelaide now)



Mammoth reconstructed in theme museum in Oreokastro

Visitors to the Museum of Mammoths that opened recently in the district of Oreokastro in Thessaloniki can see a reconstructed mammoth from 9-million-year-old fossilized bones, tusks and skull combined with artificial parts. The museum is the only one in the entire Balkan region that has on display fossilized remains of mammoths, the gigantic animals that lived in the Ice Age. A Dinosaurs' Park was also inaugurated in Oreokastro a few years ago based on an idea by Vassilis Michailidis, who is also the creator of the Mammoths Museum.

Doujon tribute at heartfelt wedding

WITH the heart of his guardian angel pounding in his chest, Kostas Gribilas married the love of his life yesterday. Standing by his side was Oliver Zammit, the man friends describe as Kostas' second father.

It was a wedding made possible by the generosity of Mr Zammit's courageous son Doujon.

The 20-year-old Sydney tourist died last year when he was bashed by at least four men while holidaying on the Greek island of Mykonos.

Kostas, who in mid-2008 was close to death when an implanted mechanical heart began to fail, was saved by the last-minute transplant of



Wedding ... Kostas and Poppy Gribilas get married at St Stephanos Greek Orthodox Church, Hurlstone Park. Photo: Tracee Lea Source: The Daily Telegraph

Doujon's heart.

In a touching display of gratitude, Kostas and his long-term partner Poppy

walked down the aisle at St Stephanos Greek Orthodox Church with Doujon's father Oliver as his best man.

About 100 friends and

family of Kostas, Poppy and Doujon were at the Hurlstone Park ceremony.

The crowd cheered and clapped as Kostas and Poppy walked down the steps of the church following an hour-long ceremony led by Father Nicholas Bozikis.

It was a day of mixed emotions as the gathering celebrated Kostas' marriage while acknowledging Doujon's sacrifice.

Friends of Kostas said the Australian-born newlywed, who met his wife Poppy in Sydney in 2006 before the couple returned to live in Athens, had been given a second chance in life.

They said Kostas and Doujon's father had become extremely close since the heart transplant in August 2008.

"Kostas considers him as a second father really," friend Fiona Lawandos said.

"They were not blood relations, but they have become father and son. It's Kostas' second family now.

"I'm pretty sure that at the reception there will be a lot of remembering of Doujon."

Doujon suffered fatal injuries when he was bashed while holidaying on the Greek island of Mykonos in July last year.

Following his explicit wishes, Oliver Zammit and his wife Rosemarie donated his organs for transplant donation.



Xydias to pay victims

Convicted Greek-Australian sex fiend John Xydias (foto) has been ordered to pay a total of \$1.08 million in compensation to five of his victims.

Xydias, who filmed his drugged victims as he raped them, did not oppose or defend the proceedings brought against him. Chief Justice Marilyn Warren said yesterday that Xydias' victims only learned of the crimes committed against them when watching the films in a police station.

"The applicants knew the respondent (Xydias) as a Dr Jekyll, but in the films they saw him as a hideous, sexual Mr Hyde, abusing their bodies," Chief Justice Warren said. "No compensation will really compensate for their physical and psychological pain," she said. Police have found 17 films of drugged women

being sexually assaulted, some of whom have not been identified. Xydias pleaded guilty to 25 counts of rape and 61 counts of indecent assault committed between 1991 and 2006 at his parents' Glen Iris home, or at a holiday house on the Mornington Peninsula. In June he was jailed for 28 years with a non-parole period of 20 years.

(source: neos kosmos)