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EASILY DONE: Orthopedic surgeon Michael Pritchard explains the procedure to Tasmanian cricketer Tim Paine. Picture: RAOUL KOCHANOWSKI

Hip surgery quick fix for elite athletes

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ELITE athletes are flocking to Tasmania for groundbreaking orthopedic surgery performed by a local surgeon.

Orthopedic surgeon Michael Pritchard is one of three doctors nationwide who can perform the innovative hip arthroscopy surgery.

With short waiting lists and rapid recovery Mr Pritchard's surgery has seen professional dancers, world ranked rowers, Australian junior tennis champions and state

cricket players back at light training within two weeks.

Arthroscopic surgery is minimally invasive and uses tiny cameras and lights to look inside joints. Less tissue is traumatised during surgery and recovery is faster.

Tasmanian-born Mr Pritchard returned to Hobart last year for lifestyle reasons and has performed more than 100 hip arthroscopies at Calvary Health Care's St John's campus over the past six months.

Star Tasmanian Tigers'

wicketkeeper Tim Paine is just one elite sportsman who has taken advantage of the local surgeon's skills.

Paine had his left hip arthroscopy performed four-weeks ago and had his right hip done yesterday.

Just two days after his left hip was operated on, Paine was weight bearing and within six days he no longer needed crutches.

"The range of motion I have now is amazing. I'm not sore at the end of the day and I won't be struggling to get

through matches behind the wickets any more," he said.

Paine said he had had trouble with both hips since the age of 17 and considered radical surgery at 18.

But the surgery would have seen his sporting career benched for a year because of lengthy recovery and rehabilitation.

"Being able to have an arthroscopy done instead of surgery means I'll be able to start pre-season training without any interruptions," he said.

Mr Pritchard said regular people are also having the operation but mostly sportsmen and women.

"Injury to the hip joint is a particular issue in the AFL and I am finding some athletes are travelling to Tasmania for the surgery to avoid waiting times at Hip Arthroscopy Australia in Victoria," he said.

Mr Pritchard is also educating local general practitioners about diagnosing orthopedic conditions and the options available to patients.