

Heritage building creates design challenges

In part one of this story, we looked at the challenges faced by Dr Chris Ho before embarking on the renovation of his practice in the Sydney suburb of Balmain. In this final instalment, we review the finished product.

When Dr Chris Ho decided to renovate the entire ground floor of the heritage building he owns in the trendy Sydney suburb of Balmain, he employed specialist design and construct company Medifit to handle the entire project.

“The building certainly had a lot of potential,” Dr Ho explained, “but getting the most out of it was always going to be a challenge. The structural work alone involved in opening the space up was considerable. I’m glad we had someone on site who knew what they were doing. Medifit’s whole team was fantastic and even when unknown structural elements were discovered, nothing was too hard for them.

“I have now had the opportunity to test all the design initiatives that we have worked up with Medifit’s design team and I could not be happier. Our patient’s response has also been fantastic; this has ultimately resulted in not only better efficiencies but has allowed us to handle our expansion and more importantly, it makes it fun to go to work.

“The feel of the place is now exactly what I had envisaged with the design team getting it spot on. The modern and clean interior sits well with our older building and is a clean and comfortable environment which reflects our practice image. It is nice to deal with designers who actually listen!”

The original brief to Medifit was for four fully functional operatories in a modern and timeless environment. The waiting area is designed to portray an open gallery feel, with low height contemporary furniture and glass tables to increase the perception of space.

Behind the scenes are the staff, steri, OPG, consultation, practice manager, laboratory areas and toilets. The areas have been design to tie into the interior in finish and feel. All have been custom designed to Dr Ho’s particular practice and management styles.

“We are extremely happy with the design result and it fulfilled all of our design requirements for Dr Ho,” said Geoffrey Raphael, Design Director at Medifit. “The style of contemporary yet comfortable sits well with the practice’s





marketing offer and we are sure Dr Ho will enjoy the fruits of this exercise with increased client referrals, better efficiencies and simply a better place to work in.”

“The building had been added to at least four times over its history and this has resulted in a lot of variation in floor and ceiling levels and a very complex old style piecemeal structure,” said Sam Aqualina, Medifit’s East Coast General Manager - Projects. “Even though we had structural engineers on board, we did not know what we were dealing with until we started opening up all the ceiling and removing some of the walls. Because we work hand in hand with our in house design team throughout our projects, we are able to subtly change the structural work without compromising on the design in any way.

“There are also the benefits associated with Medifit’s team approach and knowledge of the technical aspects of all dental equipment, which allows us to correctly pre-empt the requirements of all the varying aspects of a dental surgery construction before and during the construction period. This process saves time and efficiencies on site which relates to a well organized project.”

Dr Ho purchased new Planmeca Compact i dental units, a Planmeca Intra x-ray unit, a Planmeca Intracam intraoral camera, a Cygnus digital x-ray and a Cygnascope intraoral camera for the practice.

“The four operatories have turned a previously poorly utilized area into the hub of the new practice with new Planmeca

dental units and equipment to the majority of the new rooms,” Dr Ho said, “I could not be happier with my new equipment from Henry Schien Regional. Their service and technical support has been superb. Medifit worked in well with them on the installation of their equipment, all the technical requirements were sorted out well before installation and basically I did not have to do anything. I kept working throughout the whole construction process.”

Medifit has undertaken Dr Chris Ho’s design and construction from its concepts infancy to reality, inclusive of the arduous task of development and construction approvals with the local Council.

“My new practice is everything that I have planned and dreamed of and I just love it! It was amazing to go through the whole design process and come to the realisation that I would be pickier and more demanding in designing a dental surgery than I would ever be designing my own home. The dental surgery is such a reflection of the practitioner and our little quirks and peculiar traits are stamped into the design of our dental home. I spend more waking hours at my dental surgery and wanted somewhere that I could be comfortable in and be happy with for many years.

“I cannot say enough about the designers, Geoff Raphael and his team as they take a lot of credit for the final project. My previous surgery had a lot of walls, which did not utilise the space that





we had very efficiently. Geoff had the ability and vision to see what could be achieved by opening up the rooms and cleverly managed to put all the surgeries and support rooms into the space we had. Some key points that they managed to incorporate were the separation of the

reception from the actual waiting areas, the refresh area for patients, a consultation room, the light and airy feel of the practice with free flowing areas and the efficient and ergonomic use of space.

“I was extremely happy with the interiors and the use of Corian solid surface

benchtops. It was well worth the added cost. The seamless join of the sinks to the benches that Corian can achieve is beautiful and the fact that it is non-porous, durable and antibacterial is an added benefit. Sam Koranis had the foresight to convince me of the materials innate attributes and on meeting Mr Phil Betts from DuPont Solid Surfaces, I was sold on the product. The extra benefit also came with the 10 year warranty for the material’s performance, fabrication and installation which is fully backed by DuPont which is one of the world’s leading companies in research and development of new materials. This level of credibility made my decision to go with Corian an easy one.

“Medifit has managed the whole process from design, to development approval and construct and I am extremely happy that it was all done under the one roof. I had heard many stories of my colleagues having troubles with the project managers not being able to manage the trades or cooperate with the architects. Sam Koranis, the Managing Director of Medifit, promised a lot at the initial stages and I can say that they passed the test with flying colours. I had a dream run and the only difficulty that was encountered was when we uncovered the ceiling and there were structural problems that the external consultant structural engineer had not planned for. The problem was fixed with a minimum of fuss with the only drawback being a delay in the finish date. Yes, I was disappointed with the delay and was told it could happen but the good thing was it was done right and even better, at no extra cost!”



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