



A country practice for WA wheat belt

Bringing high quality continuing care to the country was the goal of Drs Ian Do and Nam Nguyen when they took over the Northam Dental Surgery in the Western Australian wheat belt. Before the relaunch however, the first order of business was a complete renovation of the decades old practice to bring it inline with the treatment they would deliver.

“The original dental surgery had been established for over 25 years and we wanted to build upon that success and take it to the next level of patient care and treatment facility,” Dr Do said.

“Many dental clinics in the central wheat belt are quite run down and Northam Dental Surgery was no exception. Lacking in aesthetics and functionality, it was difficult to offer a full range of dental treatment

options for patients and provide high quality care that patients have come to expect and demand from the profession.

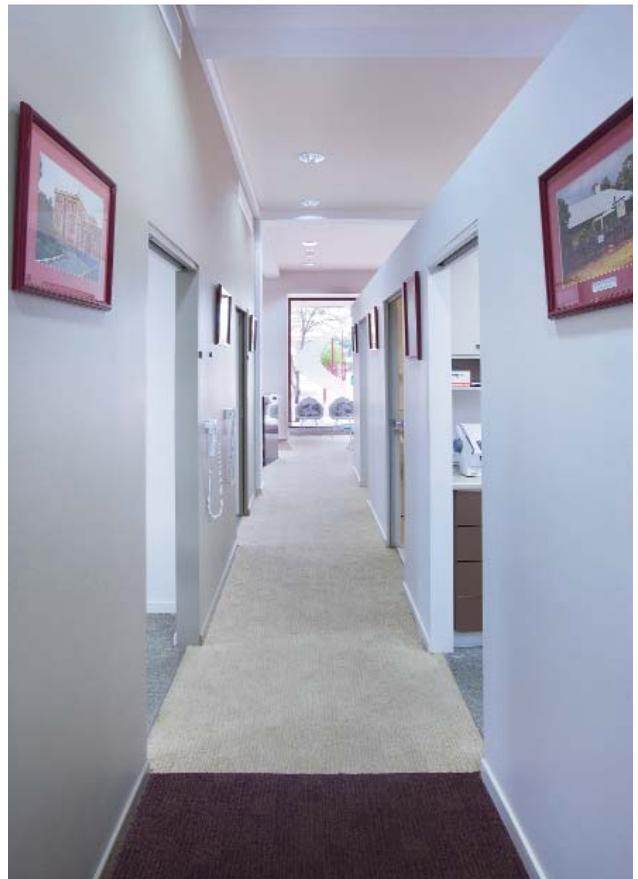
“Our intention in rebuilding Northam Dental Surgery was to create a facility which people can be confident will offer all the modern dental treatment options available and where patients will receive the highest quality of care. Up until then, most people in the Shire had believed this type of treatment was only available by travelling to Perth. We wanted to offer the ‘expertise’ of the City and the convenience of being locally available.

“Since this was our first building project, we decided to choose Medifit as they were the largest dental surgery design and construction company in Perth but also because their reputation had been faultless from various reviews and referrals.”

The brief Medifit received for the new practice called for a smart, professional feel for the new surgery, with clients feeling like they were at an inner-city practice and not an hour and a half from the state capital.

The challenging design brief called for four treatment rooms to be accommodated in the 100 square metre space plus reception and waiting area, steri area, OPG room and restrooms. Thinking outside the box, Medifit managed to achieve the end result with the wish list being fully accommodated.

Once construction commenced, the existing building on the main street of Northam was found to not only be old but also somewhat dilapidated due to years of neglect. Each time Medifit demolished part of the structure, more problems were



encountered beneath. When renovating an old building it is important to note that many issues cannot be foreseen, henceforth the reasoning behind the expense of renovating rather than building from new.

The old two-storey building was refitted and modernised with new glazed shop front windows and exterior painting and graphics. Due to the width of the tenancy as well as some exiting highlight windows down one side, the design team came up with the idea of having different heights for internal walls. This eliminated the feeling of a corridor down the middle and allowed the highlight windows to spill light in over the top of the sterilisation and OPG areas.

Extensive building works were required due to the condition of the existing building as well as the variety of different floor levels that had been inherited. Ramping was required to avoid cumbersome steps at entrances to the rearmost treatment rooms.



Four identical surgery layouts were created, one of which required extensive building work to remove existing toilets and to introduce flooring in the rear of the tenancy.

All surgeries benefit from natural light, with additional windows added in some cases where there wasn't any. Due to the very high ceiling heights, suspended lighting was employed to ensure that the right level and intensity of light worked for each room.

Space under the stairs was reclaimed for expanding the reception admin area as well as for data and communications services.

New ceilings were installed spanning between the existing concrete beams and columns that made up the existing space. The design team worked these into the design so that they formed both parts of the walls and also as design features.

Visually, the colour scheme is soft and comfortable with good use of a royal purple branding colour and highlights. The awning and front facade of the building was given a facelift and now takes pride of place in the streetscape.

Use of carpet throughout the public areas helps to dampen noise levels and the muted colours soften the cabinets and fixtures.



Summary

The Practice

Principals	Drs Ian Do and Nam Nguyen
The Practice	Northam Dental Surgery
Type of Practice	General
Location	Northam, Western Australia
Size	100 square metres
No of chairs	4

The Team

Design	Medifit
Construction	Medifit

Equipment

Dental Units	Planmeca Compact i and Compact a
Sterilisation	Mocom Millennium B+
X-Ray	Planmeca Intra
OPG	Morita Veraview IC-5
Compressor	Cattani K300
Suction	Cattani Turbo Smart B
Software	Oasis

The result is a spacious but very functional and busy dental practice that stands out in the town but is approachable to everyone.

“From planning through to practical completion, Medifit was very helpful and informative regarding their progress and any unforeseen difficulties that had occurred due to the age and the rundown nature of the existing building. Many of the structural problems associated with the old building were quickly rectified with minimal fuss or expense.

“With any building project comes some form of complication, whether big or small, and ours was no exception. Our only regret was that our completion date was so close to Christmas that any

minor faults were unable to be rectified immediately due to the building industries shutting down during the festive season.

“A business is only as strong as the weakest link and in this case, the plumbers that Medifit had contracted really let them down. In fact, due to their carelessness, they inadvertently damaged the Cattani suction unit which to Medifit’s credit, they replaced with a new unit at no cost to us.

“At every step, Medifit reassured us that they would rectify any defects and sure enough, they did deliver as promised. All the creases were ironed out with minimal down time. We were most impressed with their commitment to stand behind all their projects, in particular with the ones that did not go to plan.

You really find out the character of a company when you see how it handles a crisis situation and Medifit came through for us when it counted most.

“In reflecting on our experience with Medifit, we have learned many lessons on the in’s and out’s of building a surgery and would be more than happy to use or recommend Medifit again. Their professionalism, expertise and honesty are some of the many strong characteristics of their business that has helped build their good reputation over the years.”

