



## Excellence in a tight space

**D**r Spiro Agapitos selected a 76 square metre space in a high traffic area of Perth's Inner north suburb of Mt Hawthorn as the most suitable location to start his first general dental practice. Mt Hawthorn is four kilometres from the Perth CBD in an upwardly mobile demographic. The surgery is located on a major arterial road with high volume traffic.

Dr Agapitos graduated in 1995 and worked for the government for two years. He then went on to work in several private practices for the next six years.

"It's OK working for someone else," he said, "but after a while, you tend to wonder. I wanted to work in an environment that reflected my philosophy of dentistry. I wanted to take a more relaxed approach and provide more personalised attention for my patients. I no longer wanted to work through a high number of

patients in large, dated surgeries. So the decision was made to start up my own dental practice.

"I had selected a commercial property which was a bare shell of concrete. The next stage was to make my vision a reality. I wanted to design a practice in a way that was suited to my personality and working environment. A modern practice that was inviting and comforting for not only my patients, but for my staff as well.

"The space was small and quite narrow and our concerns were that we would end up with a practice resembling a tunnel."

Dr Agapitos approached Medifit Pty Ltd to see what they could offer. "I was referred to Medifit one of the dental supply companies. The strategic master plan that Medifit came up with seemed to increase the amount of space we had available and circumvented our concerns about the narrowness of the tenancy.

"The three dimensional images were a real bonus and I could visualize what the final product would be like. I was amazed that the hand drawn perspectives were crystalized into reality."

In July 2002, Medifit was commissioned to design and detail the fit out for Dr Agapitos within tight time and budget constraints. The brief was to create a spacious feel out of the long and narrow space with two operatories; sterilization room; combined reception/admin; staff area; toilet; and, plant/store facilities.

"In order to accentuate and amplify the perceived width, we used curved walls so that the corridor widened to meet reception, thus giving the perception that the corridor was not a corridor but more of a common area," said Geoff Raphael, Director of Design for Medifit.

"The breaking up of the walls with inserts of obscure glazing also increased



the perception of space and allowed for a level of mystique as to what was beyond. We use these design tools and others to manipulate interior space perception to the practice's advantage.

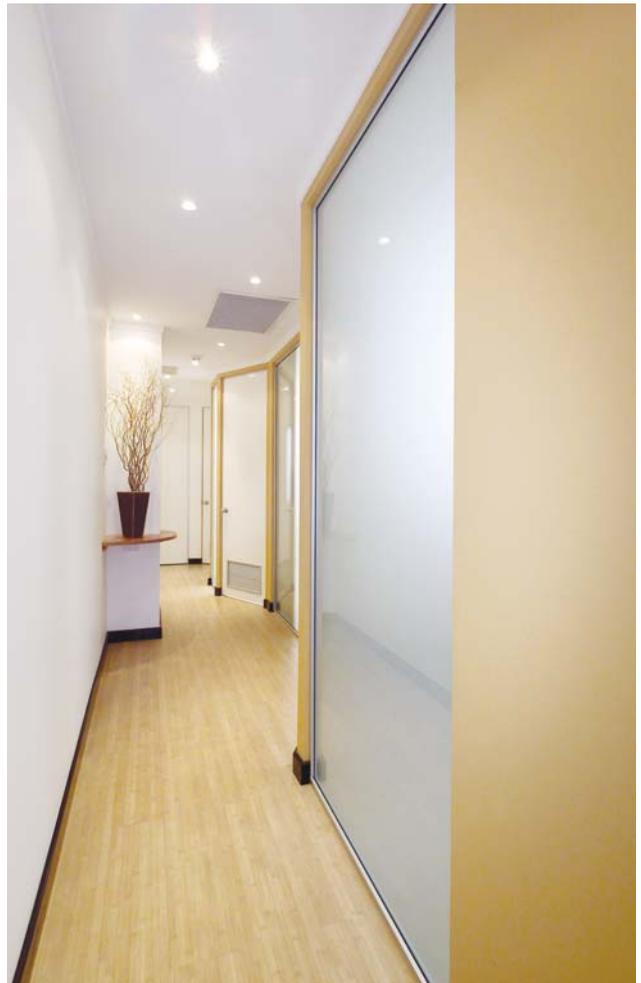
"The colours and finishes are an example of how rich colours don't necessarily cause the closing down of a space. The colours are quite powerful but segmented into elements with space between to allow the eye to travel past the elements. "A Vista is a lot more powerful as a design element than a view. A segmented vista allows for the participant to acknowledge the gradual discovery of a space or spaces. The end result is a perception of not really knowing what is beyond as a total and therefore a presumption of larger space."

The reception of "Dental Excellence" is compact, yet very accommodating from a practice and client viewpoint. The same broken element-based design is utilized in the reception desk for the same reasons of perception of space. The powerful colours of ochre and purple have been used as ways to accentuate the elements of the space.

The corridor is not a corridor but a gradual morphing from reception to operatory delivery. The pathway has interest and new discovery along the way with varying widths, frosted glazing and a small ledge for art or floral arrangements. Again, these serve to take the participant away from a feeling of a corridor and accentuate what is beyond without revealing the entire space.

The operatories were designed to exactly suit Dr Agapitos' operational requirements with a U-shaped configuration and with the Planmecca chair centrally located at 90-degrees. Corian tops were used for longevity and for maintenance serviceability. Glass splash backs add a colour feature to the room whilst also providing a very practical and sterile functional solution. The Medifit cabinetry modules worked well and were arranged and adapted to suit the exact requirements of Dr Agapitos' operation.

The sterilization room has dual access from both operatories without needing to enter the corridor. The doors connecting surgeries allow for easy access between both and the central sterilization bay. The cabinetry, splash backs and overheads again





*Dr Spiro Agapitos*



where Medifit modules arranged to suit both the MADA regulations and particular requirements of this surgery.

All of Medifit's standards were applied to the plumbing, gas, water and electrical reticulations with electric shut-off valves to the plumbing systems and proprietary plumbing boxes to name a few.

Medifit carried out the fit-out in a swift and seamless manner. Medifit's proprietary templating and programming systems allows economies of time to be gained on site and ensures that trades have no room for error in services, walls, furniture placement and scheduling of these elements.

"Medifit's knowledge of our industry was a real plus," Dr Agapitos said. "They understood all of the equipment and what was required for each unit. There was no on-site education required by suppliers; these issues were all discovered at the planning stage. The Medifit team were extremely accommodating and honoured all their commitments throughout the whole project. Nothing was ever too much of a problem."

Dr Agapitos started practicing from his new rooms in December 2002 and has had a chance to test the design. Asked about his own and his patient's reaction to the interior aesthetics and functional aspects, Dr Agapitos said: "I couldn't be more pleased with the finished product. Every new patient that comes through comments on how nice and modern the surgery looks. Some go as far as to say that 'my other dentist never had a place like this, dentistry has come a long way hasn't it!' Like anything, first impressions are very important. Having a premises that looks modern, comfortable and inviting will

make new patients feel at ease and their perception of you, the dentist, and your practice will be a positive one. If the place looks great, the dentist must be great. As the number of dental practices increase, patients will be more selective of which practices they visit.

"The surgery was designed in such a way to make an ideal working environment for myself and my staff. The frustration of working in other practices was no more. In the beginning, one of my main concerns was the waiting and reception area, due to the limited width of my premises. However, the excellent design by Medifit solved that problem. Not only is there ample room, the entry has become a focal point of my practice.

"The sterilization room has been positioned between the two surgeries which makes it readily accessible. The cabinets were specifically tailored to accommodate my dental equipment and functional requirements, making working in my surgery comfortable and uncomplicated.

"Medifit has made my vision a reality. From the first day I went to see them, I felt completely confident. Their understanding of dental design and construction was exceptional. I was able to concentrate on my dentistry while they took care of the entire project. I highly recommend them to any dentist who requires a professional fit-out from beginning to end."

