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AGENDA

WORLD CLASS

THE SUNSHINE COAST UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL IS THE EPITOME OF INNOVATION. DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE TO CREATE THE NATION'S MOST EFFICIENT PUBLIC HOSPITAL, ITS DESIGNERS HAVE BLENDED RESEARCH FACILITIES WITH FUTURE-PROOFED EQUIPMENT. AND IT'S NOT JUST THE PATIENTS WHO ARE SET TO BENEFIT WHEN IT OPENS. **PETER HALL** REPORTS P64-65

FUTURE OF OUR HEALTH IN SAFE HANDS

After decades of hard work by a dedicated team of health workers, the long-awaited Sunshine Coast University Hospital will open next year. The result of a special partnership between doctors and builders, and now near its "operational commissioning phase", it is already showing the way for future generations, writes **Peter Hall**



AN inspired Queensland health team has been toiling above and beyond the call of duty on a project that promises to redefine public patient care.

The momentous mission has stretched roles further than ever and, for some, consumed every spare moment for more than a decade.

The goal was to build, from scratch, the nation's most efficient public hospital – a facility that put patients front and centre, and focused strongly on staff wellbeing and the needs of visitors, while seamlessly blending tertiary education, training and world-class research.

Located in the heart of one of Australia's fastest growing regions – one for too long forced to lean on the state's capital – it had to be "future-proofed" to ensure it could care for the needs of hundreds of thousands of new residents.

After decades of hoping, negotiations with four premiers and six health ministers, and persevering with the labyrinthine Nambour Hospital with some buildings circa 1960s, the dream is now a reality.

The \$1.8 billion Sunshine Coast University Hospital (SCUH) at Kawana, about to enter its "operational commissioning phase" ahead of an

April opening, will showcase many innovations.

Engineering director Don Glynn and director of surgery Ratna Aseervatham say these are the culmination of a special partnership between doctors and builders.

"The clinicians own the design," Glynn says. "The level of direct input from senior doctors and a range of staff is unprecedented."

Glynn says the timing allowed SCUH to benefit from learnings gleaned from recent health projects in South Australia, Western Australia, the Gold Coast and Brisbane's Lady Cilento Children's Hospital development.

Ask Aseervatham what he is most proud of achieving in the build and you get a surprising answer.

It's not the state-of-the-art Emergency Department, comprehensive cancer services, advanced cardiac unit or maternity facilities with neonatal care that mean thousands no longer need to travel to Brisbane for complex treatment.

Nor is it the high-end equipment, such as the only combined CT and angiography-equipped operating theatre in the southern hemisphere – which will help save the lives of motorists who suffer major trauma on notorious stretches

of the Bruce Highway – clever co-location of departments, or gaining 75 per cent single rooms for patients.

It's not even a gleaming day surgery unit, unique in Queensland as it allows patients to have their procedure and recuperate in one of 54 private, comfortable and light-filled "cabins" without being shunted around. The change is an adaptation of a successful model used by the National Health Service in the UK and some Canadian hospitals.

Aseervatham says the greatest asset could be what is outside.

He says a resort-like central green space will be shared by patients, staff and visitors, and will lift everyone's spirits with its swaying palm trees and landscape art.

Combined with the atrium-style main concourse known as "Hospital Street" and expansive use of glass, it funnels natural light and blue skies and can be seen from many angles, as-

sisting with orientation as you move through the complex.

"Because of Hospital Street and the main courtyard, people won't feel like they are enclosed in a hospital, which no one wants to be," Aseervatham says. "There are so many benefits for patients and staff."

Hundreds of doctors, nurses and allied health staff contributed to design and function, even setting up prototype rooms and theatres to conduct rigorous simulations and tests.

"We have achieved

great efficiencies in movement – the prime example being our giant 'hot lift', which links the helipad to the theatre and ED," Aseervatham says.

"We have worked towards the easiest flow for patients, starting with the sickest patient that will arrive."

Aseervatham says a "hospital within a hospital" layout philosophy, with co-location of departments such as women, family and children, will allow enhanced care and greater collaboration between clinicians.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service chief executive Kevin Hegarty says the long-awaited facility will become the region's flagship hospital, opening in April with 450 of its built capacity of 738 beds.

All beds are expected to be commissioned by 2021.

Hegarty says the move will bring unprecedented clinical capability, capacity and workforce, and an increase in self-sufficiency, allowing thousands of people usually sent to Brisbane for complex treat-





UNIQUE FACILITY: An aerial view of the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital and (below, from left) chief executive Kevin Hegarty, outside the hospital, director of surgery Dr Ratna Aseervatham, one of the green open spaces, and midwife Helen Hawkins and instructor Libby Simpson in one of the state-of-the-art birthing suites.

Health Institute (SCHI). With its 370-seat auditorium, exact replicas of hospital rooms, emergency bays and operating and birthing suites, along with three clinical research laboratories and library, it will help train the next generation of doctors and nurses, and enable health professionals to participate in teaching, research and clinical practice in one convenient location.

From January, more than 1100 students and staff from TAFE Queensland East Coast and University of the Sunshine Coast will attend SCHI to study nursing and allied health.

A tertiary partner to run the medical school is close to being finalised.

In 2011, then deputy premier and health minister Paul Lucas revealed University of Queensland would fill this role.

However, in 2013 UQ pulled out.

No reasons were cited, but *The Sunday Mail* understands it was a financial decision.

Hegarty says negotiations are well advanced with another university to provide medical student education.

Another key feature of the hospital complex is the helipad on top of the main hospital building that will receive regional patients usually flown further afield to more specialist care after accidents or emergencies.

From its commanding vantage point, you can see and hear the broader influence the massive project is having on the surrounding area.

Builders and subcontractors are hammering away on rows of houses and "townhomes", as well as a major aged care facility, while convoys of trucks deliver an array of building supplies.

The community, known as Oceanside Kawana, is being developed by Stockland and encompasses a \$5 billion health, retail, commercial, education and residential hub, and retirement destination.

Set on about 100ha in the heart of the Sunshine Coast, the development includes a future town centre.

Stockland regional manager Ben Simpson says the hospital was a key economic driver for the region and its No.1 investment location.

"We are creating Australia's healthiest city by the beach – a thriving, 24/7 world-class destination which will be a centre of health and medical excellence, and a hub for research and innovation," Simpson says.

"It's also shaping up to be a major employment hub for the Sunshine Coast, with new research by consulting firm Urbis showing that 16,000 long-term jobs will be created on completion.

"This is an increase of 4000 jobs on the initial 2012 projections and shows just how successful this project already is."

There will be a variety of high-quality new home options and up to 426 apartments,

plus a range of parks and pedestrian and cycle paths, including the continuation of the waterfront path around Lake Kawana.

An eight-storey, \$63 million, 140-apartment vertical retirement village will be built adjacent to a 151-bed Opal Aged Care facility.

Developers, residents and health workers are not the only ones excited about the hospital development reaching fruition.

Sunshine Coast Business Council chairwoman Sandy Zubrinich says SCUH will deliver a new age of prosperity and the business sector was looking at how it could maximise the benefits.

Zubrinich says more than 150 influential academics, business people and community members came together in August to participate in a conference called "Realising the Ripple Effect".

Sunshine Coast Mayor Mark Jamieson says the Sunshine Coast University Hospital has already been a big winner for the region and it would continue to be.

"I know everyone is looking forward to the day the doors are officially open," he says.

"The impact it will have economically on our region is enormous and it's a vital piece of infrastructure for our community's health needs.

"One big plus is that at least 10,000 fewer Sunshine Coast residents will travel to Brisbane for specialist treatment."

peter.hall@news.com.au

HEALTHY STATS THE SUNSHINE COAST UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

- \$1.8 billion project cost
- 1st new, not replacement, tertiary teaching hospital in Australia in 20 years
- 1st public hospital in Queensland delivered through a Public Private Partnership
- 3000 staff (1000 new)
- 450 beds (at opening in April 2017) of its built capacity of 738 (expected to be commissioned by 2021)
- \$562m a year directly contributed to the local economy from 2017-18
- 10,000 patients each year will no longer have to travel to Brisbane for complex treatments



