



The Collingwood Centre

integrated care

Over the past 12 months Nelsonians have watched a stunning new 3-storey building rise along Collingwood St. The eye-catching Collingwood Centre is a vision of how medical services will be delivered in the future – a hub of healthcare practitioners working in close co-operation to maximise their patients' care.

The \$10 million development includes a new Accident and Medical clinic, the relocated specialists of Nelson Radiology and Nelson Orthopaedics, and along the street frontage, a new pharmacy. The second floor still has available space for further specialists' facilities or office areas.

As well as being tenants, the doctors behind Nelson Radiology and Nelson Orthopaedics are part of the consortium of mainly medical professionals who own the building, Tasman Medical Syndicate.

Jorgen Andersen, co-director of Arthouse Architecture, is the project architect and explains the origins of the new centre. "The brief came from a group of doctors who wanted to co-locate to offer a better service. They didn't just want a boring concrete box but it did need to be affordable. We've incorporated sustainability and design features to minimise ongoing maintenance and running costs once it's tenanted.

"With its close proximity to town, we anticipate patients arriving by car and by foot, and we worked hard to create a dynamic street edge to accommodate both. It's as pedestrian-friendly as we can make it."

Although the building is primarily constructed of concrete and steel, creative use of timber helps to soften the exterior and also guides the public in. "The exterior cedar wraps around and back into the entrances," says Jorgen. "If you follow the timber, you'll get to either the



Above: architect Jorgen Andersen surveys the exterior during construction; terracotta tiling echoes the pattern of DNA; Nelson Radiology's \$700,000 CT scanner being hoisted onto the first floor; architect's impression of the finished building



Above: Gibbons Construction general manager Shane Trench assesses his handywork; bold use of tiling, cedar and colour makes for an eye-catching building

front door or the back door. It's a subtle architectural mechanism to improve way-finding around the building."

Gibbons Construction won the contract for the building. General manager Shane Trench says his team faced challenges from the start. "Construction work started in April 2011 but as a consequence of the Christchurch February earthquake we were required to deal with significant structural changes as well as interruptions to the supply chain.

"There's no doubt that the building's been made far more robust than when we first looked at it – for example the connection between the exterior walls and the upper floor slabs has nearly twice as much steel reinforcing as originally specified. If there's going to be an earthquake in town this is probably going to be one of the buildings left standing."

Although the main structure is a typical large-scale commercial building with a

degree of structural complexity, Shane says a medical facility such as the Collingwood Centre is somewhat unique in terms of its services component.

"The heating and cooling systems, for instance, are quite involved and complex. In Nelson Radiology's new x-ray and CT scanning rooms we used the specialised X-block linings which provide protection from x-ray radiation, a system unique to medical facilities that gave our guys an insight into the building's end use."

He's very impressed by the design. "The architect has done a remarkable job. This looks so much better than in the models, and that's not a criticism of the 3D modelling, but a testament to the building and the materials they've used."

The key exterior feature is the bold terracotta tiling echoing the pattern of DNA, interspersed with dashes of vivid red. It's a lively and sophisticated design element that will help the building win awards, thinks

Nelson Radiology manager Peter Faulkner, who's been involved in the development from the very start.

"Nelson Radiology was so short of space in our old premises. We even had equipment off-site. The orthopaedic surgeons wanted to be in close proximity so the scheme started off as a new home for us both. But because the site was so good, on the fringe of the city, the owners decided to build on three levels, and include other facilities such as the pharmacy and clinic."

The radiology practice catered for more than 20,000 appointments annually in the Bridge St offices they had occupied for 36 years. The new first-floor site has space for their CT scanner, recently moved across the road from Health@132 where it has operated for the past two years, but their Richmond branch and the MRI scanner joint venture at Nelson Hospital will continue as before.

Nelson Orthopaedic Group will also relocate to the Collingwood Centre's first



Above: Shane Trench and Peter Faulkner, manager of the Tasman Medical Syndicate, reflect on their achievement

floor. Senior partner Alex Rutherford says they've always had a very close relationship with radiology. "We're probably their best customers and we can't do our job without them. In 1988 we shifted from Upper Collingwood St to be beside them. It worked for the patients, who, if they needed an x-ray, would just pop next door."

Alex says a new orthopaedic surgeon will be added to the team soon. "We have a collegial relationship with the radiologists; a symbiosis. With the new centre being a one-stop shop for patients, we'll be able to work in a more comprehensive fashion, particularly for musculoskeletal problems."

Broadening the range of facilities still further is a new Accident and Medical clinic, run by Dr Karl Hellyer, which is on the ground floor of the complex. The unit will be open every day of the week and deal with all forms of minor injury and trauma.

Karl has concentrated on surgical work for much of the seven years he's been in Nelson, but he also has past experience of general practice as well as in emergency departments.

"This will be the first of its type in the Nelson region," he says. "It's a well-worked model that services populations of similar size in New Zealand.

"We'll be able to access the services of the radiologists and refer on to the orthopaedic guys upstairs. One of the things about working from a centre such as this is we'll be able to tap into their source of knowledge as well. Having them on site means we can approach medicine in a multi-disciplinary way, which is one of the key directions in hospital medicine."

Alex Rutherford is proud of what the Tasman Medical Syndicate has achieved so far. "I think the building's fantastic," he says. "People will really enjoy it, and we're looking forward to being here for many years."



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