



DESIGNING LANDSCAPES FOR IMPROVED HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

INTUITIVELY, IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE APPEALING TO HAVE ACCESS TO A GARDEN WHEN CONFINED TO HOSPITAL – WHO WOULDN'T CHOOSE A ROOM WITH A VIEW, A COURTYARD TO VISIT AND A BREATH OF FRESH AIR?

Not just for patients, but also for visitors and hospital staff. But this Brief was not merely to support the case for 'pleasant' recovery spaces – this is about quantifiable health outcomes.

Research shows that an evidence-based approach to health facility design can accelerate patient recovery and reduce re-admissions. By extension, the role of the landscape and landscape architects in health care environments is no longer regarded as an afterthought with the addition of a few potted palms, but an intrinsic and valued element of health care service delivery.

For the new RAH in our brief there was a stipulated requirement for 'direct (<2 minutes) access to the outdoor environment from all inpatient bedrooms' and 'immediate access to a scenic view'.

Access to external areas and use of these spaces for therapy and rehabilitation is a key design feature of the hospital, as are the myriad green initiatives, including water and energy efficiency, which will secure a Green Building Council of Australia, 4 Star rating – becoming the most expensive and technically complex Green Star rated project in Australia.

This is no mean feat for the largest hospital ever built in the country – in fact the building has the largest footprint south of the equator.

Roughly ovate in shape, the whole site is over 600m long and up to 250m wide, with a site area of around 10 hectares.

As Landscape Architects, Tract Consultants has designed 102 external spaces, comprising courtyards, roof gardens and balconies across the nine levels of hospital, with a combined area of over 1.6 hectares of green space within the footprint of the hospital, and a further 3.8 hectares of 'external' landscape; the plaza and concourse knits the new RAH with its surrounding urban context.

Located on former railway yards at the corner of North Terrace and Port Road between the CBD, Adelaide Park Lands and River Torrens, the site is designed to embrace the surrounding parklands.

Connection to nature through the use of gardens and access to views encourages stress reduction, elevates positive feelings, reduces negative emotions and gives some distraction from pain, distress and anxiety. Research also suggests that natural settings can promote changes in blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension and brain activity. The green space of the facility is intended to be healing, restorative and therapeutic [...]

Excerpt from the new Royal Adelaide Hospital Functional Brief, pertaining to Green Space design.

The new RAH project brings a new function to a previously derelict and underutilised part of the city, activating the precinct beyond its boundary.

Designed as ‘a Hospital within a Park, a Park within a Hospital’, the green themes will be embedded in the delivery of health care service – with select courtyards specifically designed for therapy and rehabilitation, and all landscapes to exert a beneficial impact on all hospital users.

“A HOSPITAL IN A PARK, A PARK IN A HOSPITAL”

From the big picture landscape design approach; our design is identifiable, permeable, navigable, demonstrating outstanding technical and environmental principles, to the minutia; tamper-resistance surfaces and fixings, ramps and steps suited to compromised mobility, ample rest points, plant selection vetted to exclude toxic, allergenic and thorny species, the landscape design has been a critical component at every step of the journey.

COMMUNITY, LANDSCAPE AND ART HAVE ALL PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE NEW RAH PROJECT, WHICH HAS BEEN SEVEN YEARS IN THE PROCESS.

As with the landscape interventions, the inclusion of integrated Art throughout the hospital is another means of improving health and wellbeing, and building a unique identity through a human touch – a departure from the clinical anonymity of most hospitals. 26 South Australian artists have been involved in collaboration with the HYLIC JV consultants to deliver works with a strong sense of place and community, and which assist with wayfinding through a chromatic palette that moves from water, flora, and earth.

With construction nearing completion, South Australians will soon have a hospital facility without peer, and a new benchmark will have been set for hospital design.

Helen Wellman,
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