

ABIGROUP PUTS SAFETY AND PEOPLE FIRST

Abigroup is currently undertaking a \$160 million redevelopment of the Cavalry Mater Hospital in Newcastle.



Cavalry Mater Hospital in Newcastle.

The project which commenced on November 30, 2005, has required a logistical and innovative approach as the hospital is remaining operational throughout the works. The leading contractor has utilised its experience in healthcare to not only deliver this project to the highest standards in hospital design and construction but is garnering innovation and safety awards along the way.

Abigroup has extensive experience in the healthcare area, with over 35 successful health construction projects delivered in the last ten years. These projects include the Westmead Hospital in Sydney, the Royal Brisbane Hospital, the Epworth East (which has won a National Professional Excellence in Building Award)

and Dandenong hospitals in Victoria and the Mater Mothers' Hospital in Brisbane to name a few.

The Cavalry Mater Hospital project is being delivered under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) between Hunter Health, the Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital and Abigroup. The project involves the financing, design, construction and commissioning of new buildings (including a new 96 bed mental health facility) and the refurbishment of existing buildings on the existing site of the Newcastle Misericordia Hospital.

In order to negotiate around the operational parts of the hospital, careful sequencing of works was undertaken so that staff and patients were successfully relocated into their final locations as soon

as they were ready. To orchestrate this, the project was divided into three stages. Extensive Project Management Plans were implemented on the site in order to best manage pedestrians, road traffic, noise, dust and work vibration.

A key component to the success of this project has been good communication between the project team and the local community. This has been helped by the fact that 90% of employees working onsite are from the Newcastle region.

Abigroup extensively consulted and involved stakeholders in the design process and the Novocastrian community have contributed throughout the project. As a result, Abigroup has continually revisited the design brief, producing innovative results. For example, an alternative design for the central energy plant meant a reduction in operational costs. The reconfiguration and landscaping of a large unused podium level is now being used for patient and staff recreation. Other innovations include: improved lift performance, future proofing unoccupied floors with service access and increased concrete strength, introducing Green Energy Solar preheated hot water systems, special detailing of materials and systems to eliminate plaster cracking which saves maintenance and improving the car parking design to create greater efficiency and security.

The first stage of the project was completed in November 2007, ahead of the scheduled January 2008 date. "Abigroup is proud to have handed over Stage one nine months earlier than planned, allowing the hospital to operate and provide critical services earlier than planned," said Abigroup's project manager on the project, Robert Lindquist.

“The fact that the theatres were ready to be used so soon was a significant milestone and one that was been reached ahead of schedule,” said Robert Lindquist.

According to Robert Lindquist, the patients and staff of the hospital were happy with their new rooms and despite the challenges in undertaking the move in a live environment, were keen to settle into the new facilities. Yet as the project manager pointed out, “this is a hospital where most patients are elderly or have serious health issues and this really added to the complexity of the project”.

The second stage was made operational in February 2009, with the remainder of North Block in April 2009, Mental Health the “Main Street” and the completed chapel expected to be completed by June 2009.

Safety is intrinsic in all of Abigroup’s operations and practice, so it was with great pride that Abigroup received the 2006 Construction for Excellence in Site Safety (for Commercial Projects above \$50 million) for the project. The Master Builders Association applauded the project team

for no lost time injuries on site, the site safety plan, the safety record, the regular safety auditing of subcontractors and Abigroup’s overall commitment to safety from all levels of the site and organisation.

Newcastle Mater Hospital General Manager Colin Osbourne noted in July 2006, “the safety orientation programme has been effectively compounded by a rigorous approach to compliance checking. Abigroup’s approach to safety-related issues is indicative of why the working relationship is so positive.”

Abigroup Contractors is one of Australia’s leading engineering and building companies. Works are undertaken in areas including health, residential, retail, educational, leisure and commercial building and roads, bridges, dams, rail, water, telecommunications and mining infrastructure. Abigroup is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bilfinger Berger AG, one of the world’s top ten construction companies. 🌐



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