

Project Update

Wentworth Health Service Redevelopment

May 2025



Fantastic progress on new hospital for Wentworth

Construction on the Wentworth Health Service Redevelopment has advanced considerably as the countdown to completion begins.

Internal finishes, including floors, ceilings and joinery are continuing, including paint finishes throughout. The commercial kitchen has been installed, and the Communications Room is now complete. An Inpatient Unit Prototype Room has been completed for testing the final equipment layout and quality of installation.

Landscaping, road and car park works are well underway, with all kerbs and pavements finished. External cladding is complete, with external louvres now being installed. Electrical, mechanical and hydraulic services are being fitted off, and external CCTV cameras are being installed.

Transition planning is underway with staff so they will be ready for the move from the old hospital to the new one, with staff orientation and training and scenario testing in the new spaces to commence soon. Signage and artwork have been finalised and are now being prepared for installation.

Project Director Gert Halbgebauer said everyone is excited to see the new hospital so close to completion after years of planning and designing the new facility, followed by construction over the last 16 months.

“Building a new hospital is a complicated process, and it’s been wonderful to have the local staff and community along for the ride from the beginning.

“To see the new hospital, which is so unique to Wentworth, come alive is a testament to all of the hard work over the last few years by everyone involved,” he said.

The new hospital is expected to be completed in the next few months, when demolition of the old hospital will take place.

Progress pics:



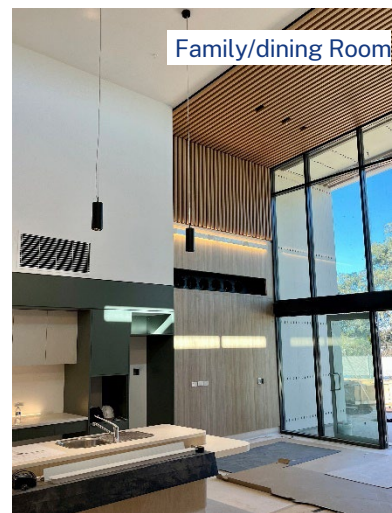
Entry and Reception



Inpatient Unit Nurses' Station



Pathways and landscaping



Family/dining Room

Vale Denise McCallum

It was with much sadness that the Wentworth Health Service Redevelopment project team learnt of the passing of our highly esteemed team member Denise McCallum earlier this month.

From day one, Denise was the project's biggest champion, and her passion and drive for a successful outcome for the project played a key role in its success to date.

As a former nurse and General Manager, Rural and Remote Services for the Far West Local Health District, Denise was dedicated to improving health outcomes for rural communities through her work.

She will be missed and fondly remembered by everyone who was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with her on this project.

Our thoughts go out to Denise's family, friends and colleagues at this time. May her memory live on.



History celebrated as new replaces old



Stuart Morris

The current Wentworth Hospital has been a part of the landscape and history of the Wentworth community for well over 80 years, and while there is much excitement about the new hospital, the legacy of the original facility will live on for all to enjoy.

The heritage of the hospital will be respected and reflected through the relocation of the many existing honor plaques, as well as a carefully curated heritage display featuring historical photographs and medical equipment.

The project team were delighted to be recently contacted by Stuart Morris, whose parents, Dr J Ross Morris and Dr Gladys W Simpson, were doctors in the very early days of Wentworth Hospital. Stuart was actually born at Wentworth Hospital and delivered by his father!

Stuart has kindly provided a series of newspaper articles and photographs, as well as the narrative behind his parents' story, some of which is shared below with his permission:

Dr J Ross Morris and Dr Gladys W Simpson, Doctors at Wentworth District Hospital 1946-1970

In early 1946, after serving in the armed forces as doctors during the Second World War, Ross Morris told his wife, Gladys Simpson, that he had found a medical practice in Wentworth, New South Wales. The previous doctor, Dr Chenery, had retired some 20 twenty months earlier and had been replaced by another, who had only lasted 10 months before abruptly leaving.

Ross told Gladys that Wentworth would suit him, as it was warm, there would be plenty of fruit and the practice would be challenging.

Gladys wrote about coming to Wentworth: "The home and practice were in a closed down bank building, there was no sewerage, no hot water service, no gas, no refrigerator, one fire stove for cooking, and an open fire for heating in winter. It was also back to the copper and troughs for the washing. It was hot, there were mosquitoes and cockroaches, and I didn't think we could stay, but as it happened we were there for over twenty four years."

Why did they stay? Gladys wrote: "I think it was because Ross was happy with the type of medicine there, he was on his own apart from me, there was a local district hospital virtually at our sole service, with operating and maternity facilities and because, before you could say "Jack Robinson" we were involved in local affairs."

Ross and Gladys started their stint in Wentworth with an 11-month-old daughter, Meredith. Over the next 24 years, they delivered 1,481 babies at the Wentworth hospital. My brother, Lindsay, who was born in September 1947, was one of those. He arrived pretty quickly, before the local doctor (Ross) arrived at the hospital. When it was my turn, in July 1950, Gladys insisted that Ross not waste any time and he arrived and delivered me, albeit in his pyjamas and with one half of his face shaved and the other not. My younger sister, Laurel, was also born in the Wentworth hospital in December 1952, though I doubt that she was delivered by a half shaven man in his pyjamas!



Dr Gladys W Simpson

The Wentworth Hospital was central to our lives. Every morning Ross would conduct a round, checking on every patient. In those days GPs did operations like tonsils and appendices. Ross was the surgeon; Gladys was the anaesthetist. In 1956, when Ross was both the principal town doctor and the mayor, the hospital was threatened by the great flood. Levee banks surrounded the hospital, turning it into a virtual island, with the access road a

thin isthmus connecting it to dry land. Ross led the defence telling the Herald Sun in Melbourne "We are staying put ... we can save the hospital!"

In 1979 a plaque was unveiled at the Wentworth hospital honouring the service given by Ross and Gladys to the hospital and to the people of the Wentworth district.

Stuart Morris
Son of Ross Morris and Gladys Simpson
March 2025

Plaque honouring Dr Morris and Dr Simpson, August 1979



Excerpt from "Nursing as it was!" from the Wentworth District Hospital Souvenir Centenary Booklet 1885-1985:

I resigned from Castlemaine Hospital as I had been appointed to the Wentworth District Hospital.

Arriving at Wentworth Hospital I was greeted by Matron Wilson (who later married Charles Crang). She was a Melbourne Hospital Trainee, 12 months senior to me.

And of course I met Elsie who was cook, laundress and wardsmaid combined. There had been a thunder storm the day before and a lot of lovely black figs had been brought in for jam. So I sat up with Elsie until midnight, cutting up figs - and after that we were pals for life.

Iras Wilson, who was engaged to Charles Crang at the time, rang him to say I was coming across to the town, so Crang's staff had a good three penneth of the New Sister before the rest of the town.

Iras left to get married and I was appointed Matron.

The Hospital had just had a wireless set donated and head phones were fitted to each patient's bed. Every Saturday night it was 'the Wrestling'. Big Chief, Little Wolf, Rising Star and the Boston Mauler, chief favourites with the male patients. I sent

away for a wrestling chart showing the different holds: flying tackle, clutch hold and dump, leg scissors and head lock. All the male patients were 'too crook' to be discharged on Saturdays.

Then there were 'egg days' at the schools, when dozens of eggs were collected for the Hospital. Elsie's lament was that they should have been preserved before bringing them to the Hospital. So I would sit up with her, bathing the eggs in "Keep-Egg"

Then there were 'Hospital Days', when donations of all kinds were brought in fruit, vegetables, jams, eggs etc. I remember Polly Robinson donating a pair of sheets, towels and pillow slips.

1937-38 was 'the year of the snake'. We got 18 that Summer - in the kitchen, the male ward and verandah, the nurses' toilet and all around the grounds.

By this time I was engaged to Arthur Atkinson, so left to get married.

Arthur died in 1961. Sister Hills asked me if I would work week-ends to let her off duty. I was then employed full time. Evening shift was from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. when I would sleep in the Nurses Home, 'on call' in case a new patient or a 'mid' came in. I had a bedside phone for Nurse to contact me.

There was an occasion when, at 4 a.m., Nurse rang me to say her car was on fire in the garage. She had rung the brigade. I thought if her car was on fire it would not be long before mine was, as it was parked alongside hers. I rushed to the garage and managed to get it out in time.

By this time, I was 65 years of age and had to resign as that was the age limit.

I then went on to nurse at Olinda Hospital for five years before retiring at the age of 70 years, 22 years of nursing!

During the polio out-break, Dr. Chenery and myself set up a 4 bed emergency hospital ward in the Showground Pavilion. Fortunately not used. The Hospital also received an "Iron Lung" from the Lord Nuffield Association, also not needed.

Iras Crang and myself were instrumental in forming the Ladies Hospital Association 60 years ago in the Town Hall Supper Room.



Members of the project team with the Wentworth Council reps at the entrance of the new health service building

Local Council reps tour site

Representatives from Health Infrastructure, Wentworth Health Service and the Wentworth Health Service Redevelopment project team took Wentworth Shire Council Mayor Daniel Linklater, General Manager Ken Ross and Councillors on an internal and external tour of the construction site of the new hospital earlier this month.

Council representatives took the opportunity to ask questions about the new facility and how it will improve the provision of health services in the Wentworth community.



Artist's impression



Artist's impression

About the redevelopment

The NSW Government has committed \$30 million to providing comprehensive, accessible, culturally welcoming and consumer friendly health care services to support the needs of the entire Wentworth community.

The new Wentworth Health Service includes:

- A 19-bed Inpatient Unit
- Primary Ambulatory Care (Community Health Services)
- A new Urgent Care Centre
- A palliative care suite, which includes an inpatient room with a private terrace and an adjacent family lounge with views to the river
- A dedicated space for families which opens to a central, shared courtyard
- A gym with access to an outdoor courtyard
- Outdoor spaces and landscaping, including a Yarning Circle and native plants.



Health Infrastructure, Far West Local Health District and Wentworth Health Service acknowledges the Traditional Custodians on whose lands the redevelopment project stands and pays respect to the peoples of the Barkindji Nation, the Traditional Owners of this land.

For more information

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