



Bright new future for Whitfords Dental Centre

By David Petrikas

They say every cloud has a silver lining and that seems to be the case for Perth-based Whitfords Dental Centre after making the major decision to relocate.

Whitfords Dental is a long-established practice, but when the lease in their old building came up with less than attractive renewal terms, owners Dr Gary Wood and his wife, Michelle, decided it was time for an upgrade to a larger space.

As a result, Whitfords Dental has now been re-established at the nearby Endeavour Business Centre just up the road at 32 Endeavour Road, Hillarys. Although the new building doesn't have the same main road visibility as the old practice, the availability of ample parking and a massive increase in floor space has more than compensated.

"I think the rule of thumb is you can lose 15% of your patients if you move and as we were looking for much larger premises to enable growth, that resulted in a week of sleepless nights for me," Michelle Wood said.

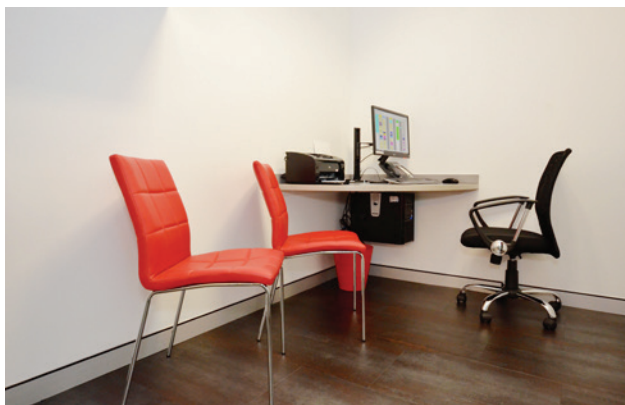
However, the strategy to expand the business has proved a success as not only has the practice retained its current patients, but also seen the return of lapsed patients and a high percentage of walk-ins who have seen the new surgery and have decided to "check it out".

"Parking over here is much better - it's probably the biggest motivating factor for everyone and nearly all the people who come in here, including dental equipment technicians and suppliers, all comment on how great the new practice looks," Michelle said.

Word of mouth referrals are now adding to walk-ins from passers by as well as the customers from a nearby fitness centre, so the move has in fact secured the future of the practice and will enable more dentists to be employed in the longer term.

Michelle personally took charge of the design aspects of the new practice, drawing on inspiration gleaned from experience with home renovations and a great eye for colour and finishes.

"I Googled lots of surgery designs for inspiration, though in the end, the layout was dictated by the rectangular shape of the former retail space. We drew the plan on a piece of paper in the coffee shop with our builder, Bill Elsegood from Dentpro and the actual plan didn't change very much at all after that.



“Our needs were pretty straightforward with a reception area, patient lounge and waiting room plus surgeries down the right hand side, with an admin office, treatment coordinator’s room and steri room down the other side. Two surgeries at the end are for the hygiene department. It’s not a complicated design, it just works because it’s a good size and each surgery has access to the central sterilisation area,” Michelle explained.

Whitfords enlisted the services of Dentpro to fit-out the practice based on some very successful renovations the company completed at the previous practice. Michelle said they had absolute faith in Dentpro to provide the quality and standard of finish they were looking for. Michelle made all the choices on the colours and finishes and explained that the bright red feature panels in the reception desk, Whitford’s distinctive red apple logo, the bright red staff uniforms and letterheads were very strongly identified with the practice, so it was a matter of finding complimentary colours.





“I wanted to incorporate the red, and because the flooring was quite spectacular, I really built the rest around the floor. It is a natural stone look with a metallic ‘mica’ type finish, so we basically ended up with a black, white and red colour scheme,” she said.

During her research Michelle saw some other features that she really wanted to include, such as shadow boxes set into the wall with bright LED down-lights to break up the long walls and splashes of bright colour in the surgeries and steri room.

Despite being a nondescript building exterior, once inside the building it has a nice feeling of light, accentuated by wide hallways and large front windows which allow light into the surgeries and the patient lounge.

“We wanted really wide hallways because where we were before was really squashy and we have four hygienists and five dentists working 5 and a half days a week, with three dentists and two hygiene rooms in use every day.”

Added flair is provided by a stylish open patient refresh area with a glazed basin and decorative framed mirror, carved hand towel container and river pebbles below. Each of the surgeries is identified by a distinctive apple logo on the frosted glass doors.

Although Whitfords already had a reputation as a great place to work amongst auxiliaries through word of mouth, Michelle has also embarked on a Platinum Professional Development program aimed at providing a ‘silver service’ to patients.

The decision was also made to invest in quality equipment that would provide the best dental care and also make the practice a very attractive place to work for clinical staff.

“Having the best equipment reinforces our offering of experienced, talented and very capable dentists with conversant with latest techniques,” Michelle said.





Summary

The Practice

Practice Name	Whitfords Dental Care
Principals	Dr Gary Wood and Michelle Wood
Practice Manager	Alexis Taylor
Practice Type	General
Location	Hillarys, Perth, Western Australia
Size	177 square metres
No of chairs	5

The Team

Design	Michelle Wood
Construction	Dentpro
Project Manager	Bill Elsegood
Installer	Dental Intelligence, West Perth

Equipment

Units	A-dec 500, A-dec 300 on 500, A-dec 200, A-dec Cascade 1040
Sterilisation	Mocom Millennium B x 2
X-ray	Sirona HELIODENT
Digital Imaging	Sirona
OPG	Progeny Vantage
Compressor	Cattani K400
Suction	Twin Cattani Turbo Smart C2
Software	Dental4Windows

This includes the use of high-resolution Acteon Sopro intraoral cameras and SoproLIFE caries detector technology for accurate diagnosis, case presentation and treatment planning, which has aided case acceptance among patients.

Michelle said she had long ago made the decision to buy A-dec equipment because it had always been reliable.

“When I add up what they cost and how little money I spent maintaining them, it was just not worth buying a cheap chair. Not only that, but my rooms are structured so that the dentists can work from any room because they are all set up the same as much as physically possible, so anyone can work in any room on any chair, even the hygienist chair if it is not being used.”

While some equipment was relocated from the old practice, Whitfords has also invested in a brand new A-dec 500 chair, the latest A-dec LED operator lighting and a new A-dec 200 chair for the hygienist room, as well as

moving across a recently installed A-dec 300 on 500 chair that was previously used in a small surgery in the old practice.

“Bill and his tradesmen were very good which enabled us to do what we did in the time allocated. With Bill’s help, we closed Thursday lunchtime, moved over the weekend and were in the new practice seeing patients on Monday. Also due to Bill’s technician working over the weekend to dismantle chairs and put them back together in the new building, we were able to keep working without any lost patient time,” Michelle said.

