

Future bright for Wonthaggi doctors

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DOCTORS and staff at Wonthaggi Medical Group are looking forward to the day when they will inaugurate a new health facility at their Murray Street location.

Although that day seems a long way away at the moment, Wonthaggi Medical Group business manager John Turner said that plans for the new clinic are well advanced and so far the planning process has been a smooth one.

“Our architects Garner and Davis are pleased with the constructive approach taken by the shire’s planning department,” Mr Turner said. “This multimillion dollar project is of major significance to the local area; it offers job opportunities to local builders and tradesmen during construction and will be a major leap forward in health facilities. It is heartening to know that the shire stands behind the project. The only disappointing aspect is that it has so far failed to attract any Federal Government funding.”

As the construction involves two building stages, keeping the clinic going during construction will be a logistical nightmare. However, the facility is also being planned with the future in mind and there is a possibility of a third stage should it be required.

Mr Turner expressed confidence that the architects managing the project will handle this aspect with minimum disruption to services. “A new facility is an exciting prospect; it will house a range of medical and other health related services including training facilities. It will greatly enhance services and the prestige of the local area.”

It is the culmination of a five year strategy to change the focus of our medical practice. In 2003, the Wonthaggi Medical Group doctors identified a number of issues that adversely affected access to health services and inhibited the recruitment of doctors to the area.

Mr Turner said the Wonthaggi Medical Group resolved to change the situation and the results can be seen today. “We have more GPs in our practice than at any other time; we have more nurses including a diabetes educator, diabetes Life! Program nurse, pap screen nurse, adolescent health nurse and nurses specialising in children’s health and chronic disease management.

The hospital now has six full time Hospital Medical Officers in the emergency department as a result of our actions in 2007. We are working cooperatively with the hospital and as a consequence there are more specialists visiting or settling in the area. This is only possible because of the post-operative care and anaesthetics service provided by our group practice. Also, many local people do not realise that our practice continues to provide the hospital emergency with support from our procedural doctors and general surgeon. In fact, we are the only practice supporting the local hospital and provide 24 hour in-patient care, obstetrics and anaesthetics.”

Mr Turner said that it is likely that the project will not be completed until the end of 2010, but in the meantime, some new initiatives such as a co-located clinic at the hospital, the establishment of an afterhours clinic and a number of new services are on the way.

“The future is bright; we have some talented new young doctors complementing our more experienced doctors. We have the prospect of a new building, more services and a climate of close cooperation with other health services, all of which will improve the quality and accessibility of services for our community.

“The recent award from Diabetes Victoria is merely a signpost of what to expect in the future,” Mr Turner said.