

Historical beginnings - Galbraith Building

As we enter into a period of growth and redevelopment it's important to understand our historical beginnings. Each issue of Project Excel will take you on a journey through the past 59 years.

Galbraith Building

Following close on the completion of the obstetric block in 1960 was a 300-bed services acute block, later to be named the Galbraith Block after Mr Ray Galbraith - the then Board Secretary.

The Galbraith block was six floors above ground and one floor below and provided expanded service areas for departments, now totally cramped and overcrowded in the original main hospital building.

Areas were allocated as follows:

Basements - three mechanical plant rooms, oxygen and nitrous oxide storage banks for theatre, wards and departments, storage space for medical and radiology records, CSSD bulk storage, orderlies equipment rooms and staff change rooms.

Ground Floor - Accident and Emergency, Radiology, Medical Records Admitting Department, Surgical Medical ENT and Audiology Outpatients, Telephone Exchange and Patient Enquiry, Medical Superintendent's Office Suite, Canteen Shop and Dining Room, Conference Room and Change Rooms for night and afternoon staff.

First Floor - 6 modern Theatres, Recovery Room and Plaster Room, Central Sterile Supply Department, Ward 11, a 15-bed ENT Ward and Ward 12, a 6-bed Intensive Care Unit.

2nd, 3rd 4th and 5th Floors - Each contained two 34-bed wards for orthopaedic and surgical patients. Wards were on each side of a central lift and stairwell sector which rose another two floors, which contained the water tower, air conditioning and lift plant equipment.

At the basement, ground and floors one, two and three the Galbraith block was connected through to the obstetric block at one end and by Accident and Emergency and rear of Theatre to the Main Building. This enabled staff, patients, supplies and service to be moved throughout the hospital under cover.

The block was fully accommodated by the end of the decade and staff and patients were becoming accustomed to the first air-conditioned hospital in New Zealand.

The Galbraith block represented the latest in modern layout and amenities. Patient rooms were arranged round the periphery, close to the central service rooms. This resulted in reduced walking times for nurses and reduced waiting times for patients.

The Galbraith block did have its fair share of growing pains. Many staff regularly lost their way, ending up in the fire-escape. The noise of the trains remains a continuing intrusion. Patients and staff often heard the sounds of sheep and cattle as trains paused or passed on the way to Westfield. Once when a train was derailed some pigs escaped running everywhere oinking through the hospital grounds!



The completed Galbraith and Obstetric blocks from the Golf Course. These two buildings doubled the bed numbers of the Hospital.