



## Heritage makeover in a class of its own

**A**ustralia's oldest continuously operating dental practice has undergone a transformation.

The building, on the corner of Carron Street and Sydney Road, Coburg was built in 1906 and originally operated as physicians' rooms. The building was designed in a distinctive style, a cross between Neo Tudor and Federation and has been a landmark in Coburg since it was first built.

In 1922, Coburg dentist Vic French Snr bought the property and it has been operated as a dental surgery ever since. In 1946, Ron French and his brother Vic took over the practice from their father.

The French family are Victoria's (and possibly Australia's) oldest established dental family with a long line of dentists and specialists that spans several generations. The building was extended in 1948 and again in the early 60's to accommodate the growing practice. After 43 years as a dentist, Ron retired in 1989 and the practice was sold to current owner Dr Jeffrey Kestenberg.

It is hard to imagine the numbers of patients that have walked through the doors in the century since Coburg Dental opened the doors. Families in the local community have visited the practice over multiple generations for their dental care and preserving this legacy would be key to the success of this transformation project.

Fittingly, as Australia's oldest national health care design and construction provider, Medifit were the natural choice for this project. The Medifit team were able to utilise their experience with heritage renovations to deliver a state-of-the-art dental practice whilst delicately preserving the heritage aspect and history of the building.

The story of the transformation is best told by Dr Jeffery Kestenberg himself...

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**I**t was on my mind for quite a long time. I knew I had to modernise the practice and I could not decide if I should relocate to a newer, nearby location or renovate our existing location which has been the home to Coburg Dental Group for over 90 years.





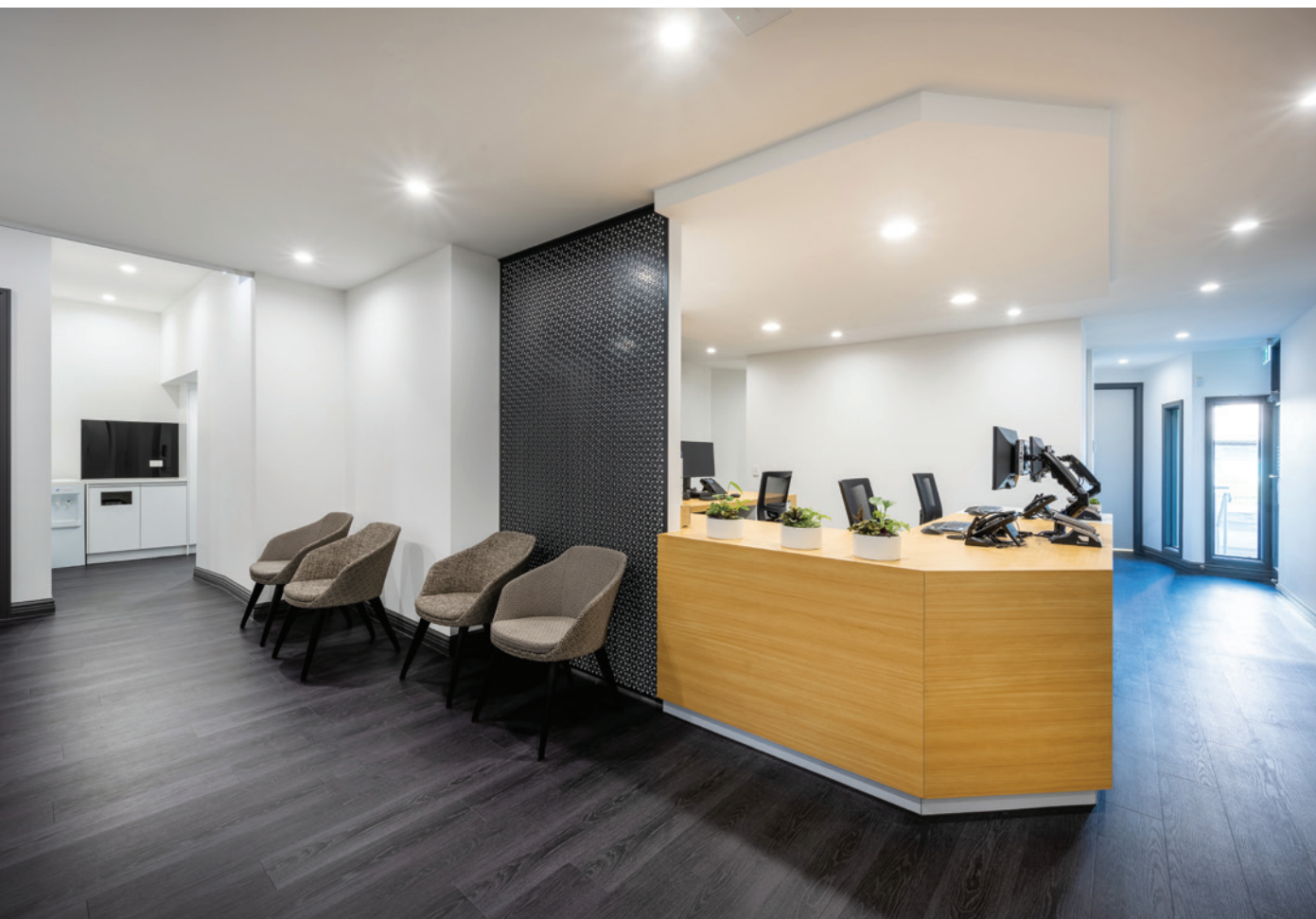
I owned the property, loved the location and everyone in Coburg and its surrounds knew this distinctive building as “the dentist”. It’s situated right on a pedestrian crossing and tram stop and is just a short walk from the train station and the bus. Street parking was readily available most of the time but foot traffic was poor. I suppose you can’t tick every single box. I looked at local properties which could accommodate us but there was nothing that was suitable for rent or purchase. Local real estate agents couldn’t assist my search successfully and time was ticking by as the search continued (Timing is everything because the COVID epidemic has resulted in several businesses closing and there are several good properties which are vacant now).

Frustrated by the lack of result from my property search, I decided to stay at our current location.

I decided to speak to our equipment supplier to see who they would recommend as Designers and Builders for a new renovation and fit out of our premises. After all, these equipment guys would be working all the time with all the dental fitout specialists so they would know who was good and who to avoid. I also spoke to a few dental finance brokers to ask the same questions. Amongst all the names which were suggested, one name stuck out as the obvious choice. They all highly recommended Medifit and that I speak to Sam Koranis, who is the Managing Director.







I met Sam at an ADIA conference about 11 years ago for an informal chat and we agreed to meet to discuss various ideas and options. Do I develop the whole property? Do I tear down the existing building and redevelop from scratch? Do I renovate and extend? Sam also has a qualification in accounting (CPA) so he could help me to crunch the numbers and work out a business plan for the project. This turned out to be very helpful later when I was negotiating with the Banks. Sam was a great spokesman for the project and the financiers have immense respect for Sam and his experienced team. He seems to know everyone!

At the same time, I still investigated other “dental fit out” companies and builders. I asked many colleagues who had renovated and closely followed social media. I wanted to really make sure that I made the right decision. This was going to be too big a project and such an important business decision, so my due diligence had to be right. Medifit again was clearly the stand-out candidate to handle my project.

After several planning meetings I decided that we would build apartments on top of a state-of-the-art dental surgery. We experienced the most frustrating period of my professional career in dealing with the most indecisive and obstructionist local council (Which I call the People’s Republic of Moreland), the banks including a change of bank manager, financiers and town planners. I had an arborist write a report for the council so that I could





have a dead tree removed, the elders of the First Nation to get their permission to develop their land, the local historical society, the neighbours and so on. We explored several different ideas which all had immense potential.

After several years, many headaches, a lot of stress and considerable expense I gave up on those plans. However, the team at Medifit were terrific through the whole planning process in helping me to try to achieve my desired end result. Finally, we decided to renovate our existing premises. This was now a renovation project and it was going to be big, totally gutting out the entire building and creating an extension to the rear with the same heritage aspects just leaving 3 outside walls and the key structural internal walls. A completely new fit out was undertaken and all the new equipment was going to make Coburg Dental Group a wonderful state of the art facility to work in.

Medifit was intimately involved in all the planning, design, tendering process, building supervision and fit out of the renovated premises. We also decided to vacate our building as this was to be more cost-effective, cleaner, quicker and easier than having the renovations done while we were still occupying part of the building. We found temporary premises nearby and Medifit helped us with the temporary fit out and relocation.

Each stage of the project was undertaken with expertise, professionalism and minimal fuss.

Whilst the building is situated on a double block, it also has a council imposed historical overlay. This isn't as stringent as a heritage listing when it comes to conforming to rules and regulations, however conditions still apply.

Renovating any building which is 110 years old is never easy. There are unknown treasures and many surprises when you tear down a wall or rip down a ceiling.

All types of flora and fauna, a major rotting wooden beam, a collapsing wall and a history of layers of floor coverings were found, just to name a few of our surprises.

Medifit acted as my eyes and years on site and supervised the structural elements of the build to ensure any problems were promptly resolved with no time lost. As a result of their expertise, I had no headaches, no stress and could focus on my main job, that of a dentist treating patients, albeit in our temporary premises. Medifit also looked after all the daily hassles, no matter how small.

Despite the COVID-19 epidemic, the lockdowns, supply issues and the usual issues with trades, the building renovation finished exactly on time as planned. The fit-out finished exactly on time and the equipment installation by Anthos was undertaken exactly as planned. That was truly amazing!

My staff, family, patients and I are so happy with the final result. It is well and truly far beyond our wildest dreams and it has rejuvenated our desire to come to work.





Sam Koranis and each member of the Medifit team have been wonderful. Most importantly, their communication with us has been exemplary. I have received over 500 emails from them over the last few years. I was told they sent over 5,000 emails to everyone concerned with the project. Absolutely, everything has been documented.

Most importantly, my accountant and bank is also extremely happy too, especially with the fact that no variations were made considering the complexity of the project.

There are many people who I would like to thank for the success of our project.

My wife Ruth who has always supported all of my professional dreams and aspirations and is simply the best. She encourages, supports and facilitates everything I do.

My family in general who put up with a lot, particularly during the few stressful times. I love each and every one of you.

My Practice Manager, Rachael, who I am blessed to have as the leader of our Coburg Dental Group team. She has been my “right hand person” for over 25 years and without her, nothing would ever get done. She is an amazing woman who has sacrificed so much to ensure the success of the Coburg Dental Group business. She works after hours, weekends, on her days off and even when she’s on holidays. Her family has also been amazing in supporting her when needed.





## Summary

### The Practice

The Practice	Coburg Dental Group
Principals	Dr Jeffrey Kestenberg
Type of Practice	General
Location	Coburg, Melbourne, Victoria
Size	305 square metres
No of chairs	6

### The Team

Design	Medifit Design & Construct
Construction	Medifit Design & Construct
Installer	Anthos In Australia

### Equipment

Dental Units	Anthos L9, Anthos R7, Anthos A9
Autoclaves	MELAG Vacuklav 40B+ Evolution MELAG MelaTherm washer disinfectors
X-ray	MyRay Hypersphere with MyRay Sensors integrated in Anthos Units
CBCT	MyRay Hyperion X9 PRO 3D CBCT Ceph
Compressor	Cattani AC 400
Suction	Cattani Tandem Turbo Smart

My staff have all been wonderful. Thank you for all of your help each and every day. Yes, you all get paid to work but your loyalty, dedication and willingness to work extra when required, to help with our shifting to the temporary premises on the weekend, reorganizing the practice, putting up with all the inconveniences and stresses and then moving back to the newly renovated premises over Easter and your days off has been terrific. Thank you for a job well done.

Thank you, Sam Koranis, the Managing Director of Medifit, who I have now known for 11 years. His knowledge of the dental industry, his support and accountability are second to none.

Also, a huge thank you to all the Medifit team who were involved in our project, including Mark, Gerry, Sow-Yoong and Lynda together with the onsite project management team of Michael, Rob and Jackie. You were all great people to work with.

Craig Spiegel and his team from Credabl finance have been wonderful too. I have known Craig for over 20 years and have done many deals with him over this period. Purchasing our state-of-the-art equipment and fit-outs were made so easy. I could



never find a better deal than the deals Craig offered and believe me, I tried!

Thank you to the team at Anthos in Australia headed by CEO Phil Pagliuso, general manager Bobby Trenkovski, together with Frank and Ray, the ever-dependable installers and technicians. I have used Anthos equipment for most of my career and cannot recommend it highly enough.

I highly recommend the entire team that worked on the project as true professionals in their selective fields. Thank you all.

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Medifit's Sam Koranis added "We knew we'd been entrusted with something special at Coburg. A dental legacy that stretched back for a century requires a special combination of skills and experience and I was always confident that our team would deliver. Having known Dr Kestenberg and shared this journey with him and his staff over many years, we are proud of what we have been able to achieve together. Myself, along with the entire team at Medifit thank Jeff, Rachel and everybody at Coburg Dental Group for the opportunity to be involved in such an iconic makeover project and wish them well in their new practice.