

Building a future for aged care – the Willowood Centre

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Columbia Aged Care Services is creating quite a buzz with the new state of the art Willowood Centre which recently opened in Chatswood. The centre is taking advantage of new technology ensuring that resident needs have been integral to the design and construction of the building.

It is also setting a benchmark for sustainable building features in residential care which are over and above what any facility is offering today.

The rebuilding of the new Willowood Centre commenced in April 2005 and the 90-place centre caters for 64 high-care and 26 low-care residents in a mix of single and twin rooms. Respite care will be offered at both care levels and residents with dementia are catered for.

Willowood Facility Services Manager, Jennifer O'Connell said "It is an opportunity for us to change the culture of residential aged care through building and technology innovation so residents have the best quality of life possible, and staff working environment is enhanced."

"It will be the newest centre on the North Shore offering standard fees so it is affordable for everyone in the community, including pensioners. No bonds are taken for high care and all residents have security of tenure and the ability to age in place dependent on care needs," said Ms O'Connell.

Lucas Stuart Project Manager, John Brodie said "The building was designed to improve the functionality and amenities in a practical cost effective process while simultaneously minimising negative environmental impacts."

Supported by the use of new technology, the integrated nurse call and telephone system and the electronically operated beds will reduce staff movement and improve human resource efficiency as

well as creating a quiet environment for residents and staff.

Rainwater is harvested and used to irrigate the property and is recycled back into the toilet system. This reticulated water system increases the quantity of rainwater harvesting 10 fold compared to the Council DA Conditions for Irrigation and reduces water consumption by over 50% per month.

The garden was designed to require little or no water and even the mulch is collected from the filter on the downpipes which discard leaves at various points for collection.



Reducing the amount of power consumption was a particular focus. In the basement car park, carbon monoxide monitors regulate the exhaust fans operating times, reducing power consumption by 30-50%. This also improves the life cycle costing of all the equipment connected to the car park exhaust system by reducing maintenance and replacement frequency.

The 45 degree roof pitch provides maximum thermal resistance and improved insulation in the roof space. This results in improved ventilation in summer and reduce air conditioning loads. The outside tiles were chosen to minimise reflection and absorption of heat.

The use of low energy globes throughout the building provides an

80% reduction in power usage for lighting in addition to increased globe life. Equalisation of power input at the mains results in a reduction in power consumption of approximately 15%.

Automatic movement sensors for all bathroom lighting, plus use of movement sensors timers for other areas ensures minimal light and therefore power usage as well as increasing globe life and minimising maintenance.

Resident comfort has been integral to the design and construction of the building. The lounge and dining areas on each floor have a garden view, and also overlook the wonderful central atrium which has a sensor controlled louvres so it can be used even on wet days. On the ground floor, residents can see the chef and staff at work through the kitchen window.

So that family can easily stay in touch, each resident has access to the connection of a telephone and internet service. They also have a wall mounted LCD television which is individually controlled from the bedside handset. All bedrooms and communal areas have controlled air conditioning.

The beautiful Magnolia Room caters for families when a quiet area for discussion or reflection is needed; it can also be used by all faiths when people gather together at special times.

A high degree of resident, staff and property safety is achieved through unobtrusive active and passive security measures. Fire safety is advanced with the use of a sprinkler system throughout the building.

The building has been designed with the future in mind. The improved practical building techniques, material selection and workmanship standards ensure vastly improved quality construction. This will result in longer practical life for all building works and ensures minimal maintenance over the longer term. The building materials and products were also chosen for future recycling value. For more information www.cnh.com.au