



Case Study 31

Wyndham Health Service

Hoppers Crossing VIC

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Wyndham Health Service

"The key elements of architecture are form, light, colour, space, texture and pattern," asserts John Henry, the designer of an innovative new health centre that exemplifies this philosophy. Located in Melbourne's outer west, Wyndham Health Service provides primary care, dental and mental health services, and a base for the Royal District Nursing Service and Mercy Palliative Care.

Its residential location prompted the adoption of domestic scale, elements and materials for the 4000 m² building. John Henry describes the floorplan as "deconstructed and non-institutional." A serpentine central spine allows staff-only access through the central block to a wing at each end, with finger-like extensions on the eastern wing.

"We put different colour bricks in each wing to break the building down, add interest and most importantly, to relate to the pattern of the surrounding residential fabric," he explains. "Each wing has a primary brick colour. The planning is made up of a number of little rooms. To make it feel like it wasn't just a plain wall with holes punched in it, we created a surround and made the brickwork inside a contrasting colour. The windows can be moved laterally within the surround and placed wherever the rooms are."

In the central block, the "texture" component of Henry's architectural philosophy is provided by courses (and occasionally whole panels) of split brick headers. How did the bricklayers react? "At first they were a bit aghast. 'Bloody wanky architect!' But there were fantastic bricklayers on the job. They laid some test panels and at the end of the day they loved it!"

Links:

www.isispc.com.au

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"The irregular headers cast a beautiful texture"

Originally the bricklayers proposed saw-cutting the extruded (wirecut) bricks. "I said, no. Just get your bolster and whack the brick. The more jagged it is the better." The irregular headers cast a beautiful texture over the face of the building. "As the sun passes across through the day you get shadows coming off the broken bricks. It adds a continuously moving texture to the building's facade."

The building's non-institutional character is continued internally. A skylight roof highlights the reception area's raked ceiling. A nearby cafe and play area are both linked to external areas. This informal atmosphere is reinforced by the internal street, which accesses the various agencies and services.





over the face of the building”

Top:

At dusk the centre's entrance takes on an eerie appearance. The circular skylight allows shadows to be cast on the wall by the split brick headers.

Right:

Courses of split header bricks create a corduroy-like texture on the main facade. The diagonal band of coloured bricks is a whimsical feature that occurs at irregular intervals.

Left:

Each wing has a primary brick colour with a contrasting surround and inset panel. Building material colours and textures relate to the surrounding residential properties.

Below:

The centre is laid in an arc with wing extensions at each end. A variety of brick colours and treatments help create a non-institutional character.

Wyndham Health Service, Hoppers Crossing VIC

Client: Department of Human Services & Isis Primary Care

Architect: KLCK Woodhead International

Builder: Royal Como (in liquidation)

Bricklayer: Mainline Constructions

Building cost: \$11.5 million including furniture and fitout

Photography by Roger du Buisson, Derek Swalwell

