

HOSPITALS' ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

D. J. McColl

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GOVERNMENT DISTRICT HOSPITAL

D. J. McColl

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CONTENTS

Editorial	5
New Respiratory Unit for Polio Cases at Prince Henry Hospital	7
The View from the Hill	11
Gosford District Hospital Feature	
Care of the Aged	16
By C. J. Cummins, M.B., B.S., D.P.H.	
Hospitals' Association of NSW	17
Executive Minutes from April Meeting	
Association Film: "The Nurses' Story"	26
Trends in Nursing Education	28
By Prof. Morven Brown, M.A., Ph.D., Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of N.S.W.	
What Others Are Doing	33
News of Hospitals, Staffs and Auxiliaries from all over the State.	
Trade Tells	36
Ingenious Ice Making Machine	





GOSFORD DISTRICT HOSPITAL

● Looking from a window in the surgical view, one sees this view of the hospital grounds.

The VIEW from the Hill

A young hospital at Gosford is grappling with a rapid population expansion, in circumstances which give it special local problems.

It has taken some splendid forward steps, is planning others. But the problem ever before it is that of meeting a mushroom growth of human need.

THE lovely gardens surrounding the Gosford District Hospital overlook a panorama of natural beauty, tree-surrounded with lake-like Brisbane Water sparkling below.

*A broad outlook shows so much beauty
—and so much waiting to be done*

Spread through the landscape are the houses, mainly newish, and ever-increasing in number, raising the population of the town, 53 miles from Sydney, to 52,000. There are in addition an estimated 200,000 temporary residents in the near district during holiday periods.

Looked at from the hospital grounds, the tree-set town becomes a visual responsibility — one which

the hospital seeks to care for by making the most ingenious use of its 65 beds.

Despite its 50-80 classification, the hospital forecast shows that it will deal with 3,300 in patients and 20,000 out patients during the current year. Its peak loading is 72 patients in its 63 beds.

This is not an old, neglected hospital: it was originally built in 1946



● The fleet of cars which provides transport for the Gosford District Nurses. With the cars, left to right, are Sisters K. Senell, K. Blott, J. Fagan, E. Pollock.

with about 30 beds, and four years ago was added to to bring its accommodation up to 63 beds, of which 30 were for maternity and 33 for general medical and surgical cases.

A careful watch on intake led to a revision of this proportion, and a conversion job was carried out which resulted in two extra beds with a reduction in the number of maternity beds to 23, and an increase to 42 general beds, with the inevitable result that as if by magic the maternity intake began to rise from 550 in 1959-60, 637 in 1960-61 and 800 forecast for the current year. A top loading of 28 maternity cases has been experienced: and the general and surgical beds are still insufficient.

In order to improvise extra accommodation, Chief Executive Officer Walker was able to procure the co-operation of the Acme Bedstead Company in designing a modification of divan beds planned for the Chevron Hilton Hotel, Sydney. The result was a very useful fold-away bed of standard hospital height, constructed of light metal, capable of being unfolded by a nurse in the space of a few seconds.

Seven of these beds, often placed in the hospital's fortunately wide corridors, help to ease the peak demands.

But the use of seven extra beds naturally calls for the ancillary facilities—pan service, laundry, catering, nursing; and it is not as easy to provide these services for the extra beds as it is to unfold them and fill them with patients.

"We don't approve of this type of extra accommodation, but we have to do it," Mr. Walker says. "The re-arrangement of some of our accommodation previously provided for some extra space: we found it possible to make up one extra room just big enough to accommodate one bed—and we are using it.

"The next step, however, must be the remodelling of the front of the hospital to provide a recovery ward and a larger X-ray department, and a re-arrangement of administrative offices which are very cramped and inadequate.

"Funds are being awaited for these purposes, the plans of which we have had in mind for over six months now. But even this will not help us a lot. You can stand at the front door and see our main problem—a district which is growing faster than we can cope with its demands, and a district which has highly specialised population problems."

What are those special problems?

★ The district, being a healthy rural atmosphere not too remote from the city, is a favourite place for Sydney people to spend their retirement: for this reason there is a very high geriatric demand.

★ The electric train has made the district a residential area for young married people who can travel from it to Sydney daily to work: rapid expansion of new homes is introducing a steadily mounting demand upon the maternity wing.

★ The main Newcastle-Sydney road passes through Gosford, and has a high accident rate which places heavy emergency demands on the hospital from time to time.

★ The population of the area is increasing at the rate of about 4000 people a year.

The summary of Gosford's hospital position may best be seen in the fact that in N.S.W. hospital accommodation is at the rate of 6 per thousand, and occupied at the rate of 4.5; in Victoria the accommodation is 6.5, occupied at the rate of 3.9. Gosford's accommodation is 1.3 per thousand of the district population.

The measures taken to cope with this situation have, of necessity, to be realistic.

★ The average stay of a patient is only seven days, thus ensuring a maximum turnover.

★ Admission has to be highly selective, and limited to acute and emergency cases.

★ Holiday-makers who are admitted, and travellers who are brought in as a result of accident, are transferred to other hospitals as expeditiously as possible.

The accommodation of holiday makers is a special feature of Gosford; the area is sufficiently close to Sydney to make it a very popular resort and the township is the centre which serves at least a dozen seaside places, in addition to camping sites.

The turnover of holiday casualties inevitably throws considerable extra strain upon the hospital's resources.

The main Pacific Highway also runs through the town, and in the Gosford district this winding road has been the subject of considerable criticism because of the frequency with which accidents occur on it.

These accidents also increase the demands made on the hospital's casualty section, and at times make an increased demand on its mortuary facilities.

The Geriatric Problem

Seventy six per cent. of the population of part of the Gosford district is made up of retired or invalided people, leading to the heavy geriatric demands with which a hospital much larger than this one would find difficulty in handling.

Gosford has come up with an answer which relieves the position within the hospital, and yet provides an extensive service to the group of cases.

This solution is a district nursing service comprising four fully trained nurses, each having a segment of the district, and each provided with her own car.

These nurses are in the hospital's control, being staff nurses appointed especially for the district work. The first service, commenced in 1955, proved its value rapidly; a second service began in 1959, and two more have been started in the last two years.

A great community spirit supports this fine system. Each of the four districts has a committee, and

each committee raises funds for the running and replacement of the vehicles, the initial vehicle being put into service by the hospital.

It is estimated that £200 a year is the running cost of each vehicle, and that the turnover of vehicles once every two years, despite the fact that there is sales tax exemption, costs £50 to £100.

The district committees are separate from the hospital auxiliaries, but again the splendid community backing of the hospital is evidenced in the fact that six auxiliaries are functioning. The Gosford Auxiliary provided £1200 in the last year. This year a similar amount will be received, including £500 for the installation of a very modern and effective public address system throughout the hospital.

In arranging the installation of this AWA system, the hospital planned to have an increased number of speakers, tuned to lower volume, so that any call over the system is heard at all points throughout the hospital, and yet the loud, brassy tones of high-volume speakers (necessary when only few speakers are installed) do not disturb the peace of the wards.

"I am firmly convinced," Mr. Walker says, "that the reduction of unnecessary noise in hospitals is

very important, both for the patient and the staff. A very well-known doctor once told me that he thinks every hospital administrator should spend a week as a patient in his own hospital, and I heartily agree. That way, we learn a lot."

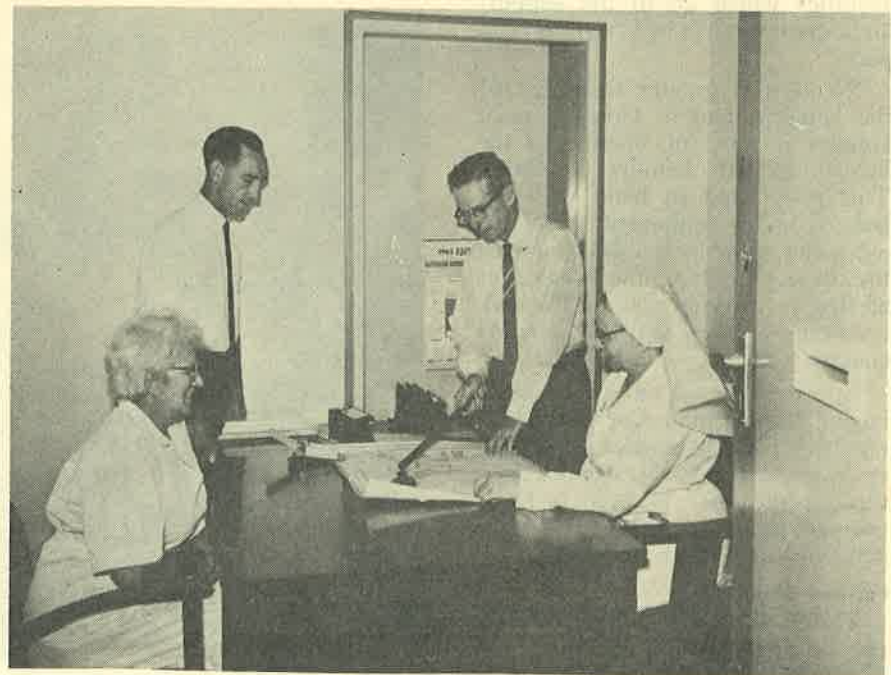
In the unceasing endeavour to keep pace with the rapidly growing demands of the district, the hospital is moving a step at a time. Moving but, as Matron Inskip says, hardly fast enough.

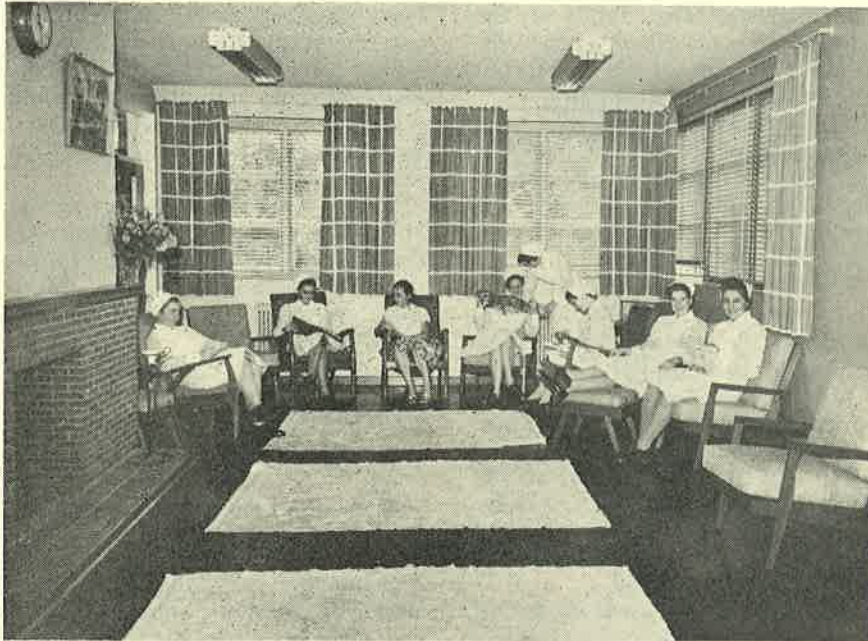
A newspaper correspondent recently wrote on hospital accommodation and quoted an overseas view that the more beds that were provided in a community, the more people would want to fill them.

"I cannot go along with that," Matron Inskip said. "I think it is fundamental to hospital practice that a population is entitled to know that they can be admitted to a hospital should the need arise. The sorting out of unnecessary applications, is a medical problem, and one which every hospital has to solve from time to time as things are. But I am firm in the opinion that people who genuinely need hospitalisation, should have the certainty that it is available for them."

The matron said she would like to see additional beds in Gosford with district hospitals in the sur-

● An office discussion between (left to right) Mrs. M. Porter (housekeeper), Messrs. F. Milroy (radiographer), G. W. Walker (chief executive officer), and Matron Inskip.





● Portion of the spacious modern TV lounge in the Nurses' Home.

rounding area; the immediate advantage would be that it would be possible to keep patients longer, where this seemed desirable, and would obviate a percentage of transfers to the metropolitan area.

Matron Inskip also felt that the hospital should be able to devote more space to catering to the geriatric needs of the district.

"But beds are only part of the story," she pointed out. "All the facilities which go to the support and servicing of a bed have to keep pace."

No need is greater than that of the laundry, and at Gosford most laundry is sent out, because of the inadequacy of laundry facilities. This goes hand in hand with the lack of boiler equipment; for one old boiler, quite incapable of meeting the present needs of the hospital, is all that is provided now, in the boiler room—a room which is not big enough to house extra boilers.

In order to meet current requirements, the hospital has installed a number of independent electric boiler units at the necessary positions throughout the hospital. These compact and efficient units meet the demands for steam sterilisation.

Positive Steps

The X-ray room, which at present is small and ill-equipped, has

only one machine, and Mr. F. Milroy, the radiographer, handles nearly 400 patients a month single-handed. He has done 55 exposures in one day.

His work has been increased by the development in the district of a public health activity which is universally regarded of paramount im-

portance, in the chest clinic. The Department provides the staff, and the hospital the accommodation, for the chest clinic work; but there is no extra hospital equipment to handle the increased turnover of work at this stage.

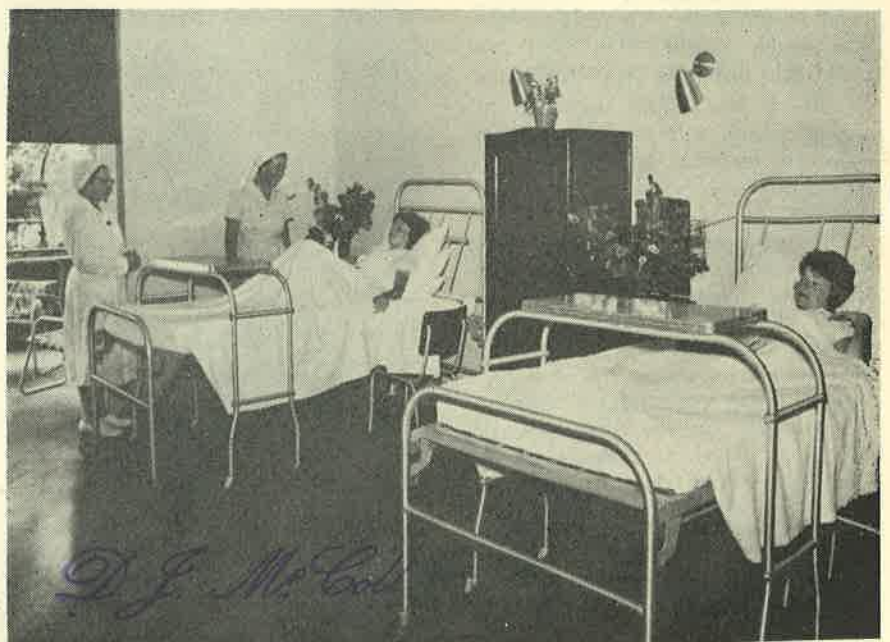
This is one reason why the next development is visualised as essentially containing a new, bigger, and more efficient X-ray department.

The scale on which Gosford hospital visualises new developments is one which is most praise-worthy, as exemplified in the newly-built mortuary.

The old mortuary, about the size of a suburban bathroom, and separated from the boiler room only by a thin partition, ill equipped and primitive, was often called upon to hold three cadavers at once, and could provide grim surroundings for persons called upon to identify them.

The new mortuary, a separate brick building, is marked by modern design, and a very human quality of thoughtfulness. The main mortuary room, furnished with a stainless steel autopsy table and a refrigeration cabinet, is only part of the wing; a separate entrance allows visitors into a "viewing bay,"

● Matron Inskip and Sister Holden visit a section of the Intermediate Maternity Ward.





● Chairman of directors of the Gosford District Hospital, Mr. J. H. Little.

and this again is divided into two parts, a waiting room for the visitors, and a bay into which cadavers may be trolled from the main mortuary room. Curtains separate the two portions of the "viewing bay," as also does a waist-high iron railing. Thus visitors may approach the railing and when the curtains are parted, perform their necessary duty of identification, in circumstances which minimise the difficulty of their task.

Tile-floored, and wall-tiled to six feet, painted in modern and tasteful colours, both the mortuary room and the viewing bay give an impression of cleanness, brightness, and modern approach. The unit is a splendid example of forward thinking, and eases the much-mentioned problem of police use of hospital mortuaries. The record of the Gosford mortuary shows that it holds 65 hospital to 75 police cases, and this particular hospital, with its new equipment, finds less difficulty in receiving police cases than it experienced in the past, and less difficulty than is experienced in many less fortunately provided hospitals.

The mortuary register fully records any possessions of the deceased, and any property remaining in the mortuary with the body, as well as that taken possession of by the

police, so that this practical aspect is fully dealt with.

Medical Staff

Perhaps one of the most fortunate aspects of the Gosford Hospital is that there are 30 doctors in the district, of whom 19 are honoraries.

There is no resident medical officer, however, and no medical superintendent.

Honoraries have expressed their willingness to co-operate fully in assisting a junior resident, if one should be appointed, agreeing that the doctor rostered as on call at any particular time would accept the responsibility and render every assistance to the junior.

It is probably remarkable, in view of the existing arrangements that the hospital's theatre recently handled 52 major operations in one month, and expects to have 350 majors over the year. Minor operations will total over 1300 this year.

In February, 1962, the 42 general and surgical beds in the hospital averaged 47.7 patients a day.

Remembering that annual 4000 increase in the population of the district, the bursting-at-the-seams volume of work taxing the hospital's

COVER:

The Gosford District Hospital, set in a garden which is beautifully kept and spacious. From the garden and hospital extensive and beautiful views of Brisbane Water and the surrounding district are seen.

capacity, and the many urgent demands to be answered by the hospital's Board, leaves one wondering about one other aspect of Gosford—the calmness, cheerfulness, and dedication which is evident in the officers, the staff, and the whole get-well atmosphere of a very well-lit, bright and nicely maintained institution.

From the verandahs and the gardens, again, the beautiful lake-like view is evident.

But the view from within, the broader view, is one of so many demands, so much accomplished, and so much urgently waiting to be done.

● Nursery Sister F. Smith in the nursery at Gosford.

