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How Gold Coast's north will undergo major healthcare revolution

A population boom has kicked off a healthcare infrastructure revolution set to transform the city's north and ease critical medical issues. See all the major changes to come.

Construction of the \$1.5bn Foxwell Coomera private hospital will begin in 2024 as its developers move to capitalise on the city's health revolution.

The first stage of the health precinct, put forward by joint venture partners Keylin and Kinestone Group will feature a day hospital which will "provide ambulance bays, GP clinic, allied health, day surgery theatres, specialist suites, medical offices, pathology and pharmacy services".

Project director Jason Murdoch said significant milestones would be reached next year after work on the 47.7ha project.

"We are currently in the process of appointing an operator and builder for the private hospital, which we intend to finalise in the first half of 2024.

"Foxwell Coomera's internal road network has also received planning approvals and work will commence early next year on Prosper Ave, the first stage of connecting Foxwell Road to Beattie Road.

"These milestones enable us to finalise the concept precinct plans we've been progressing as part of the masterplanning process, and we intend to lodge a series of development applications in 2024."

The joint partners last year unveiled their master plan for the site, which will have a \$700m, 400-bed, 60,000sq m state-of-the-art hospital at its heart.

No operator for the hospital has been announced.

There will also be dining and business precincts and retail offerings.

It is one of several health projects planned for Coomera.

The state government is planning to build a \$1.3bn hospital precinct of its own which will have a 13-storey hospital at its heart.

Northwest Healthcare also lodged plans with the Gold Coast City Council in mid-2022 for a dedicated mental health hospital on Foxwell Rd. The three-storey Aurora hospital will have 60 beds and is the second stage of the health precinct, which will become one of the key planks of the rapidly growing suburb's future.

Mr Murdoch said the Foxwell precinct would feature specialist and allied health services, premium end of trip facilities, a rooftop function space to host future medical related seminars and corporate events, and a ground level cafe for patients and visitors.

"Our team looks forward to the Coomera Town Centre evolving into the principal regional centre of the Northern Gold Coast," he said.

"This foundation is well underway with the Coomera Public Hospital breaking ground, Costco opening, NorthWest's Mental Hospital commencing works, Coomera Connector under construction, the first apartments being delivered in the region, and the opening of Foxwell Coomera Convenience Food Precinct."

REVEALED: MAJOR CHANGES COMING WHEN NEW \$1.3B HOSPITAL OPENS

Talks are underway to expand critically overburdened services at Gold Coast University Hospital (GCUH) to a new \$1.3bn hospital set to open in the city's north.

Gold Coast Health CEO Ron Calvert speaking to The Bulletin revealed that plans are underway to "relocate" a number of under-pressure services offered at the tertiary hospital to the new Coomera Hospital once it opens in 2027.

The changes mean that services like paediatrics and maternity will be among some of the first to be split between the two hospitals, freeing up beds at GCUH to be made available for other in-demand services.

Mr Calvert said: "The main benefit of Coomera Hospital coming on stream will be the ability it offers to allow expansion of the really specialist tertiary services at GCUH.

"So the first thing we'll do will be to relocate some of our services, the ones that are really expected to be under the most pressure by 2027."

But a "complicated commissioning process" means that when the hospital opens in 2027, not all services will come online at once.

Instead, "core services" like the emergency department, ICU, general medicine, general surgery and theatres will be the first to become operational with the remaining services to come online in staggered stages.

“We don’t run services on the Gold Coast on a geographic basis,” Mr Calvert added. “So (Coomera Hospital) will be run on a functional basis.”

It comes as population forecasts for the Gold Coast estimate a one million population by 2046, with half of city’s residents to be living in the north.

“But don’t forget about 40,000 people live just over the border and the nearest tertiary hospital for them is GCUH,” Mr Calvert added.

“But as their population expands and the Gold Coast’s population expands, (our services) will need to grow.”

The hospital will also join a network of new medical services launching within the Coast’s north including the city’s first Medicare Urgent Care Clinic in Oxenford and a \$1.5bn private Health Precinct on Foxwell Rd.

The Oxenford clinic opened on Monday November 13, providing walk-in, bulk-billed urgent medical care. It is expected to relieve pressure on Gold Coast EDs.

However the Coast’s healthcare infrastructure boost comes amid a crippling workforce shortage.

Mr Calvert said: “Recruitment is probably the biggest single issue that most health services across the globe are facing.

“There’s a worldwide shortage of healthcare workers and it’s in the millions and that’s expected to worsen as time goes by so we’re thinking really hard about that.”

Prior to the Covid pandemic, Gold Coast Health operated at a four per cent staff turnover rate. Since then, Mr Calvert said that rate had increased to nine.

“So we’re talking to universities about the courses that they offer because we want as many graduates as possible to be on the market looking to work here. We’ve got tendrils in the UK and other countries.

“But the biggest thing we’re working on is culture. There’s a lot of evidence to suggest that high morale equates to high quality outcomes. So we’re investing a lot of time in training of managers,” Mr Calvert added.

Construction for the northern hospital is set to begin early next year. It will provide 404 overnight beds and around 100 non-overnight beds and bed-equivalents.

Once fully operational, the hospital will also offer vascular surgery, obstetrics, gynaecology, cardiology, radiology, pathology, gastroenterology, rheumatology, neurology, orthopaedics, plastic surgery, renal services, allied health and a pharmacy.