

Designs of the time for Taree Pharmacy

Design Portfolio gives Taree's oldest pharmacy - Manning River Pharmacy - a makeover and show us how they did it.

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Manning River Pharmacy has been in Taree for over 100 years and is the oldest pharmacy in town. Over the last 12 months it underwent a radical transformation. Our client, pharmacist Diep Nguyen took over the pharmacy more than 5 years ago and worked tirelessly since that time to improve the pharmacy offer and customer service, but the old shop was just too small and not designed with the needs of modern pharmacy in mind, so there was a definite limit to what she could do.

Diep finally decided to shift the business two doors down the road, to the premises that are more than double the size of the old shop. In addition to that, more support space was

to be built on the roof in the upstairs extension.

When she approached us to design her new pharmacy, I thought the challenges created by the new space were formidable. The new space was almost 50m in length by less than 7m in width – extremely long and narrow. It also had two entrances and two levels. A lot of thought had to be given to designing traffic flows that would enable customers to freely circulate throughout the entire store, and to avoid bottlenecks as well as dead spots. The additional entrance, whilst by itself a good idea, could create security and customer service issues. The location of counters and the sightlines

throughout the space needed to be extremely well planned to avoid customers being out of sight of the staff. For added visibility, no fixture in the middle of the pharmacy is now taller than the shoulder height.

The position of the dispensary in the store was another major issue to be resolved as it required a large amount of space (that could potentially 'choke' the customer traffic), as well as good sightlines for the pharmacists over the entire pharmacy. To add to that, next to the dispensary we had to incorporate the Compounding Lab as well as the Weight Loss consulting room.

Diep says, 'On the plans

of the original building, the space looks long and narrow, but when the pharmacy has been built, the store actually feels large, roomy and proportionate. In addition, we have gained enormous amount of valuable wall displays due to the proportions of the original space, therefore converting this difficult space challenge to a major advantage.'

Another major challenge was to design the look and feel of the new space. We felt the ambience had to be right for the local Taree community, especially as the pharmacy had been there for such a long time. We had to do a lot of research about the town and its residents. Fortunately, we had completed a large and



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very popular furniture store in Taree two years ago, and this helped us to better understand the local environment. We also needed to design the new branding program for the pharmacy, including the new Logo.

The name Manning River Pharmacy proved to be a good cue for us, so the entire theme was based on the river that flows through the town and is an integral part of its life. In the interior we used natural colours – greys, browns, whites, with blue accents; the floor uses a material that looks like recycled timber. The overall feel is friendly, open and inviting.

The new Logo is very contemporary and reflects the ‘river’ theme as well as the feeling of calm and free flowing water. We also designed environmental

graphics that run above the displays through the entire space. The graphics depict the nature around Taree – river, hills, forest. The same design is used on prescription folders, bags and labels. It became another unique symbolic element for the pharmacy, making it memorable and setting it apart from the rest.

We worked with the client to use this opportunity to dramatically improve customer facilities and services. The store now has a state of the art compounding lab which is highly visible from the majority of the inside space, a dedicated room for Weight Loss programs and a strikingly looking Beauty room. Several consultation spots have been created, as well as a large Webster packing facility upstairs. There is also a very comfortable customer waiting area and a kids play area.

Together with the client, we have re-looked at the merchandise mix, eliminated some poorly performing lines and added some others. In particular, the professional lines, as well as gifts, cosmetics and perfumes departments have been much improved.

In such a large space, it was important to ensure that customers are able to find the right product. The departmental and services signage plays a major part in that. In addition to the static signage, we are also utilising plasma TV’s to display moving environmental signage designed by us for the project. This adds to the ambience of the environment. It will also allow the client to broadcast product information and events messages.

Diep says, ‘I was worried about building the new pharmacy because the space

was very difficult to get right and also I wanted existing customers to feel good in the new store. We’ve been open a couple of months now and the store works very well for us. Almost every single one of our customers told us how much they love the new store; in addition, we are getting new customers coming in who never noticed us before, even though we have been there for 60 years!.’

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