

How to share in the Kawana health precinct boom

Fuelled by the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital and its associated health precinct, the population of the Wurtulla-Bundilla area is expected to nearly double in the next 25 years.

The number of people working in that area has grown by 16% over the past five years, compared with a 10% growth in the entire Sunshine Coast region over the same period.

Kawana Chamber of Commerce, backed by the Sunshine Coast branch of Regional Development Australia and Sunshine Coast Council, is doing all it can to ensure local small businesses benefit from this booming health precinct.

Their **Ripple Effect** project, funded by RDA Sunshine Coast and the council, was initiated last year to make sure businesses were aware of the opportunities being created, and how to take advantage of them.

One business that has already benefited from the boom is Regson Fabrication, a Kunda Park-based steel fabrication company that has established a strong reputation over the past 25 years for providing quality metal products.

During the hospital's construction, Regson was responsible for all metal work associated with Car Park 2, including façades, screening, bollards and services protection.

The company also manufactured and installed the internal metal work for Car Park 1, as well as building and installing public art in the courtyard of the main hospital building.

Regson Fabrication now provides metal products throughout the site, problem-solves issues that have arisen since the hospital opened, and provides a full maintenance service.

Company director Nicky McMillan said Regson understood the building structures because it had been involved with the project from the design stage of the first structure - Car Park 2.

"We manufactured and installed the first sign advertising that a hospital had been approved and construction was about to start," she said.

Empyrean Lighting, which designs, manufactures and supplies high quality LED lighting solutions and is located just around the corner at Birtinya, is another company to benefit from the new hospital complex.

It redesigned its standard Andromeda Linear luminaire to be fitted with motion sensor technology for use in the hospital car park. The multi-level parking facility now

contains more than 1500 32-watt luminaires, providing equal light distribution throughout all levels, at much reduced energy consumption.

Through its connections with Sunshine Coast Council, the chamber of commerce and Cleantech Industries Sunshine Coast, Empyrean Lighting was introduced to members of the Lend Lease team. That led to the company being given an opportunity to spec a product from the plans.

Empyrean's Gemma Layfield said the project proved their ability to work with the big players in the construction industry under their terms and conditions.

"We've now got a product suitable for carpark applications which we have continued to develop and improve for future clients," she said. "Our work at the hospital carpark assisted us in obtaining further carpark projects with other hospital clients."

Nearly 30 representatives of local business, state and local government, and business organisations recently attended two workshops which provided information about the changing demographics of the area around the health precinct, and the support available from the council.

This support included:

- The Sunshine Coast Business Gateway, which connects businesses to projects and procurement opportunities, and highlights registered businesses to contractors. Registration is free.
- The Level Up program, which helps small local businesses connect to faster internet, and teaches them how to use digital tools effectively.
- Economy ID, which provides the business community with a single platform to access current demographics, sectoral and business data – handy for identifying the best location for a business, target marketing campaigns and securing finance.
- Access to the Events page on the council's website, which provides opportunities for businesses to capitalise on appropriate events.

The Ripple Effect project estimates the Kawana Health Project can create more than 16,300 jobs – 6,280 in health care and social assistance, but thousands more in retail, education and training, repairs and maintenance, accommodation and food service, and public administration and safety.

The Ripple Effect model is likely to be applied to future projects on the Sunshine Coast.

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