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Healthcare design needs greater cultural focus

Leading Melbourne architect Corbett Lyon has called for greater cultural input into the design of healthcare and hospital facilities to achieve more patient-friendly outcomes.

Speaking today at the International Art and Healthcare Conference at the University of Melbourne, Mr Lyon said there has been a continued trend over recent decades to focus on functionalist and medico-centric models in healthcare design.

“Healthcare facilities and hospitals have too often become highly institutionalised and alienating environments.

“By adopting a more patient-focused and humanist approach centred on the integration of art and cultural programs in the design process, we as architects have a role to play in helping achieve more patient-friendly outcomes.

“We need to shift away from the prevailing functionalist and medico-centric models to a new paradigm where families and patients are put at the centre,” Mr Lyon said. “Art and cultural ideas are key to this success”.

Mr Lyon is a Director of the Melbourne-based architectural practice, Lyons, which is designing the Queensland Children’s Hospital (QCH) in conjunction with Conrad Gargett in Brisbane.

“We and the extended project stakeholder group on QCH are bringing new patient-focussed delivery models which link architecture, art and a range of cultural programs together in an integrated way to create a new form of healing environment for this Statewide facility.

“With QCH a cultural priority is intrinsic to the design of the building. The design concept is inspired by a living tree narrative of local stories, local vegetation and history which are reflected in the art programmes and art installation which is built into the building,” Mr Lyon said.

A curatorial panel with visual arts, performing arts and education experts are working with Lyons architects and Queensland Health to collaborate on the installation of fixed artworks, sculpture, video and performing arts programs at the hospital.

“As a place where young children, young adults and their families come to access treatment and ongoing support they need to feel at ease in what has traditionally been a highly institutionalised and alienating environment.

“This is a major paradigm shift not only for hospital administrators but for healthcare planners and designers – but the time is right for us to rethink how our major healthcare facilities are recast in a more humanist and patient focused way through a greater cultural input. All of the worldwide research is now starting to support this,” Mr Lyon said

The new Queensland Children’s Hospital has commenced construction and will be completed progressively by 2014.

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