

MEDIA RELEASE

Move over Bob the Builder meet ‘Walter’ the Crane and Crew

You can't miss them. Perhaps it's the bright orange hard hats and specially made shirts, adorned with "Gosford Hospital Crane Crew" or maybe it's the great big smiles that illuminate the faces of the Walter Construction crane crew on Gosford Hospital's construction site.

According to crew member, Mark Farrell from Jilliby, "it doesn't get any better than this. It's quality of life, working close to home on a major development that will benefit our own community."

Normally, Mark Farrell, Paul Summerill and David Hamilton, all local residents, would get up at 3.30am to head to Sydney and return home at 7.30pm. But since the 48 metre high, 70 metre body length tower crane was recently erected on the construction site at Gosford Hospital those early starts and late finishes are a fading memory.

For the crane crew and hundreds of other local construction workers that will be employed at both Gosford and Wyong Hospitals construction sites during the redevelopment it means work close to home and family.

"It's not just about less time away from our families," said David Hamilton from Avoca Beach, "there's a real sense of community on the Coast that you don't see when you're working on some of the big developments in Sydney."

"We're proud to help build our own hospital and people are genuinely interested in the work we do."

"I think the crane has become a bit of a landmark for the hospital," added Mark Farrell, "especially after the children at the nearby childcare centre nicknamed the crane 'Walter' because of the huge sign that lights up at night."

"We're not the only ones to benefit from the redevelopment," continued Mark. "Many of the sub-contractors are Central Coast based and will be using materials from local suppliers."

The crane crew work as a team with Paul, Mark and David sharing the operation of the crane, both driving and on the ground as dogmen. While dogging they relay signals back to the driver, such as when a load is ready to lift and where it needs to go.

According to Paul Summerill from Wyong, "as construction on the hospital progresses all crew mates work together to guide the crane and deliver materials to areas of the construction site difficult to observe as the building goes up."

Every morning the driver runs through the preventative maintenance and safety checks on the crane to ensure it is ready for operation.

“If the crane stops then there might be a hundred or more blokes unable to work,” said Paul. “On a job like this you can’t afford downtime.”

The crane has a series of gauges measuring conditions such as wind speeds and load weights to ensure all safety standards are met. If wind speeds exceed 72km per hour the crane does not operate, as the stress on the structure would be unsafe. It is for this reason that when not in use the crane is left as a weather vane (free spinning).

Load weights are monitored too and overweight loads initiate alarms that prevent the crane from lifting the load.

“Being a hospital this construction site has special needs and so an electric crane was chosen over the usual diesel-powered crane,” said Paul “reducing noise to ensure patients and staff are not disturbed.”

“Walter” and the crane crew expect to be on site at Gosford Hospital for 10 months.

- ends -

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