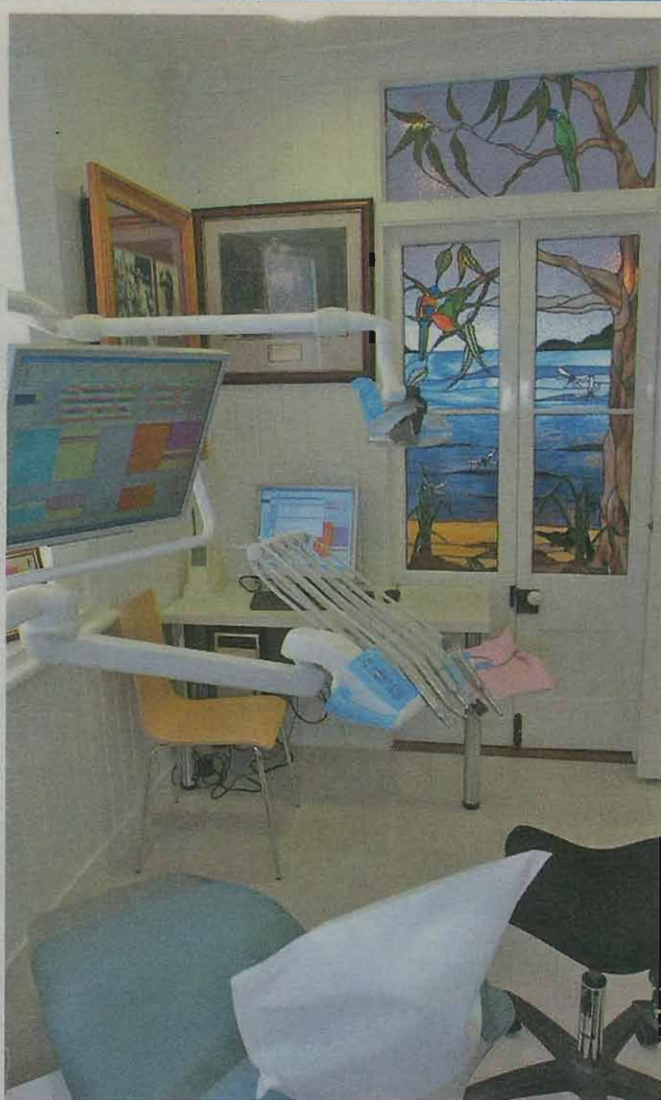




Above: Dr Craig Courtney's outside his renovated dental practice NAI15661 **Right:** The dental surgery DWM30442 **Below:** The reception area VFP12983 Photos: TROY RODGERS



Going TOOTH and nail

From Page 21
 "Dental surgeries are the most highly compliant of all health care practice fitouts by a proverbial mile. As well as the ordinary requirements like disabled access and parking, you need hydraulic engineers for plumbing and enormous electrical requirements as well as provision for radiation.

"A dental surgery is about 85 to 90 per cent compliant to an operating theatre because of the cross infection control."

"There were a lot of challenges which we weren't prepared for," said Craig.

"For instance some of the windows hadn't been opened for years and they all had to be taken out, the glass either replaced or reputted, new catches fitted and the timber sanded back and painted.

"Luckily my uncle Billy Owens took charge of the windows, and he managed to source

matching old glass where we needed it, so they're all original.

"Then when the windows were finished we realised that it was far too glarey.

"I didn't want to spoil the outside by putting up awnings, so I had to find a different solution. We ended up cutting the glare with lightweight white blinds on the inside.

"The building was in good shape structurally so that was good but because it's so old the walls weren't all square which brought its own problems.

"The floors were all covered in vinyl and when we lifted it, it had kept the floorboards in excellent condition so we were able to sand and polish them in the reception area."

For the hallways, though, he opted for carpet as a noise reduction measure.

The old french doors leading into what was once the main



Some of the sports memorabilia that adorns the walls

bit of a story attached and it was the first thing people looked at.

"So when we moved into the new premises I put up some of my sports collection and people are intrigued by them."

The gardens were a separate job and one taken on by Townsville firm, Natureform.

They designed and planted the gardens so that there are lush lawns, flowering plants and trees as well as several paved areas intended to become green retreats as the plants grow.

It's taken two years to complete the job, and a lot of hard work, but Craig is happy with the result and so, he says, are his patients. "I know I could have done it more cheaply, but this way it's interesting, it's got character and it's welcoming, people like to come here which is just the way I want it."

— MARY VERNON

bedroom and is now the main surgery have been given a new lease of life with custom designed stained glass from Townsville Stained Glass.

"I'm very pleased with them and they're the first thing that most patients comment on when they come here for the first time," said Craig.

The next thing which catches their eye is the extensive collection of sports memorabilia on the walls.

"In the old surgery I had some really nice paintings but I don't think anyone really noticed them. Then I hung up a framed Don Bradman bat with a



The gardens have been fully landscaped KRF23115



Fighting TOOTH and NAIL to save heritage

It was a big job but dentist Craig Courtney defied his critics and renovated a magnificent Queenslander to house his practice. MARY VERNON reports

EVERYONE thought that Craig Courtney was mad when he said he was going to renovate a 100-year-old Queenslander in Charters Towers Rd to house his dental practice.

"My lawyer, my accountant, everyone thought I was certifiable," he said.

"They pointed out how much cheaper and easier it would be to

bulldoze the old house and build a brand new building."

But Craig wouldn't be put off. The house was bought from Townsville's famous mayor, Lucky Harold Phillips, in 1957 by dentist Geoff Kelly who lived in the house and conducted his dental practice in a small building in the front garden. Craig bought the practice and the small building in 1992, and when Mr Kelly died in 2001 he bought the house as well.

"I needed more room and I like old

Queenslanders, I thought it would have a lot more character and appeal than a new building."

And so the work began. Craig commissioned a Perth firm, Medifit, which specialises in the design and fitout of dental surgeries and they proved to be the only people who supported his plan to refurbish the house.

"We thought it was too much of a building to knock down," said Sam Koranis of Medifit.

"It had too much architectural integrity and heritage. If you look at Charters Towers Rd, it's just an endless row of standard, boring, new commercial buildings.

"What we've achieved with the Courtney building is a beacon of the way it could be. That's why the colours were chosen, to draw attention to this magnificent building.

"To knock it down and build a new



Above: The house before the renovation and as it is now, right

Top: The reception area during renovations, left, and the finished area, right

Below left: The renovated surgery

building, what you would lose would be worth much more than what you would save in money."

But, he conceded, it was a big job.

"We started by gutting the entire interior, then created the structural support we needed, and then began fitting it out.

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'We thought it was too much of a building to knock down. It had too much architectural integrity and heritage. If you look at Charters Towers Rd, it's just an endless row of standard, boring, new commercial buildings'

— architect Sam Koranis