Essential Care Dental in the Brisbane suburb of Graceville is a brand new practice just opened by two young dentists who see a big future in offering quality dental care.

Drs William Pham and Nikhil Morriswala first met while studying dentistry at UQ and their friendship has endured throughout their early careers, which, to date, have seen both working full time at various locations for Queensland Health and part time in private practice.

“We’d always known we wanted to own our own practice one day,” Dr Morriswala said, “and Essential Care Dental came about based on an opportunity we drove past one day.

“The practice is located in a new medical complex in Graceville that we found two years ago while it was still in the conceptual phase. A developer had bought the existing shops on the site with the intention of demolishing them and setting up a multistory hub for healthcare practices.

“As we were considering starting a practice from scratch, we could see definite advantages in being located in a facility like this where we could interact with and receive referrals from the other practices in the complex. Graceville is also a very good suburb and the site very visible, so it essentially ticked all the boxes.”

After signing a lease on a 124 square metre tenancy “off the plans” that included specific requirements of when the space needed to be fitted out and operational, Drs Morriswala and Pham went in search of specialist help for design and construction.

“We initially met with some of the dental fit-out specialists in Brisbane but didn’t find anyone we immediately connected with,” Dr Morriswala said. “Then a dentist we know told us about Levitch Design Associates [LDA] from Sydney and to look in Australasian Dental Practice at some of their projects. We did that, liked what we saw and subsequently called them.

“We liked LDA’s approach right from the start and how they presented themselves. We met up with them and they could immediately see what we wanted to create and explained how they would approach it.

“LDA seemed very reputable and we could see that their work was of a very high quality and standard. We felt that they understood our needs better than anyone else so as we were all essentially on the same page, we moved to the next phase and started developing the design.”

Building in the essential elements for successful practice

By Joseph Allbeury
The requirements for the new practice included three treatment rooms, a sterilisation area and lab, consult room, reception and waiting areas and admin, storage and staff areas. Fortunately, restrooms are communal to the building and did not need to be accommodated within the tenancy.

“Once we started the design phase, it further reinforced that we’d made the right choice. The process went very smoothly and with only a few variations, we had everything we wanted locked in,” Dr Morriswala said.

“In terms of atmosphere, we wanted a very warm and welcoming environment that projected a feeling of calm. We also wanted to have a modern look that would differentiate us from some of the older practices in the area and reflect our fresh approach.
We’re young, vibrant people and we wanted the practice to reflect our personalities to an extent and to also be different to the stereotypical dental practice.

LDA incorporated a colour palate and complimentary finishes and flooring inline with that aim. Specific design elements like a lowered reception desk to enhance communication between the receptionist and patients were also introduced. A separate payment area, still connected to the central administrative area, was created so that financial arrangements could be discussed in private.

“One of the aspects that LDA handled particularly well was the zoning of the practice into patient, clinical and staff areas,” Dr Pham said. “The tenancy is not huge, yet they’ve successfully enabled these three functions to be separated in a way that doesn’t conflict with patient flow in any way and actually enhances the operation of the practice.

“Another outcome we wanted to achieve was to have surgeries that presented well to patients but were also very functional. We felt the other fit-out companies we spoke to were either strong on form or strong on function. LDA was a good blend between the two and we were very comfortable with deferring to their experience and expertise in that regard as well.

“As an example, we were concerned that the treatment rooms they designed were too small, but now that we’re operational, the design in fact works very well and is not only functional with good ergonomics, it also presents the clean, professional look we wanted.”

Equipment for the practice was purchased from local A-dec dealer, RJ Dental Sales & Service who supplied two A-dec dental units, W&H Lisa Fully Automatic steriliser, Sopro PSP!X phosphor plate scanner, Sopro X-Mind DC x-ray units and Cattani plant equipment.

“We use A-dec equipment at Queensland Health and find it to be excellent to work with,” Dr Pham said. “The chairs are comfortable, the units look great and function well and they are very reliable. So whilst we did look at alternatives on the market, we kept coming back to A-dec. The feature that finally sold us was being able to quickly convert from right- to left-handed operation. Nikhil is a leftie and I’m right handed, so even though we each have our own surgery, it builds in versatility for the future.”

Ensuring Essential Care Dental will stand the test of time is important for Drs Pham and Morriswala and is reflected in their choice of a dental design and construction specialist like LDA and equipment from the A-dec range. As young dentists starting their own practice from scratch, ensuring it will look great and function well for many years will enable them to recoup their investment and profit from their skills.
“We have tried to plan for the future,” Dr Morriswala said, “and LDA were able to offer much insight into how best to do that. Overall, we were both very happy with the design and construct experience. Friends told us that the fit-out was the most stressful part of starting a practice, but we found it to be far easier than we imagined.

“Thanks to LDA, we finished the project within the required timeframe and the price that they estimated upfront wasn’t much different to what we paid in the end, which had been a concern with some other companies we spoke to.

“The practice looks great, works well and our patient base grows daily. We started with zero patients but having the medical centre next door has proven to be invaluable.

“We’re also working 7 days a week and opening on Sundays which gives us an edge and attracts patients from much further afield, right across Brisbane in fact, who we would never normally see.

“All in all, it’s been a very positive experience and given Essential Care Dental every chance of success.”