

Clinic to ease burden

NIKKI TODD

toddn@goldcoast.com.au

THE region's first GP super clinic is a step closer to reality with plans due to be submitted to Tweed Shire Council within weeks.

The new \$7 million clinic, which will house more than 20 doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, will be built at Corporation Circuit in Banora Point and is expected to take the load off The Tweed Hospital nearby.

Plans for the clinic will be submitted to council this month, with construction expected to get under way next year ahead of an expected opening by mid-2013.

It will be the first super clinic to be built in the area with tender applications for a Gold Coast super clinic only closing in May.

The tender for the Tweed clinic, won by private consortium Ausjendia Pty Ltd, comprises three highly respected GPs from the area - Dr Austin Sterne, Dr Diane Blanckensee and Dr Jennifer Soden, who between them boast 50 years experience.

Dr Sterne said he expected the clinic would employ at least two or three more GPs and allied health professionals in X-ray services, pharmaceuticals, podiatry, physiotherapy and psychology.

"I think this is a great facility and ultimately because we will be a teaching and a training practice, we will attract new doctors, new nurses, new physios, new dieticians, all the allied health professionals," Dr Sterne said.

"It will be a centre of excellence, so we can be associated with universities and we will



Dr Austin Sterne says the new GP super clinic will be a centre of excellence

be practising high-quality medicine."

Dr Sterne said the clinic would also work closely with The Tweed Hospital to give patients continuity of care.

The facility is one of the first to be delivered in the Federal Government's super clinics program, launched amid much fanfare by former prime minister Kevin Rudd in 2007.

But the \$650 million program, which was last year extended to cover 64 clinics across the country, has drawn accusations of delays and mismanagement.

Richmond MP Justine Elliot said she was pleased the Tweed project was finally under way.

"What is really important about the GP super clinics is they take the pressure off our public hospitals," Ms Elliot said.

"I am really pleased to have it in the Tweed area, particularly with our older population, we know how important it is for them to be able to access health services and, of course, for our families."

Banora Point and District Residents' Association secretary Pat Tate said the clinic would be most welcome.

"I think it is going to be absolutely fabulous for the community," Mrs Tate said.

"These three doctors who will be running this are so highly thought of in the whole area, and their vision for the future of what they are going to have here is just magnificent."