

# Repairs and Maintenance

## Policy

BaptistCare believes that providing a good standard of maintenance improves the wellbeing of our tenants and ensures that the amenity and value of properties is retained.

This policy outlines the process for how BaptistCare will provide repairs and maintenance services to its tenants. It applies to the completion of all tenancies for the following housing types:

- Social housing
- Affordable housing
- Transitional housing

| Definitions                           |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Affordable Housing                    | Housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households and priced so that these households are also able to meet other basic living costs, such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education. As a rule of thumb, housing is usually considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of gross household income. |
| Residential Tenancy Agreement (Lease) | An agreement under which a person grants to another person for value a right of occupation of residential premises for the purpose of use as a residence.   |
| Social Housing                        | Housing for people on a very low to low incomes. People within this group are eligible for public housing and are registered on the NSW Housing Register and are usually in receipt of some form of Centrelink or other statutory payment, and have an annual income that is in the lowest quartile for income distribution in Australia.                           |
| Tenant                                | The person who has the right to occupy a residential premises under a residential tenancy agreement.  |
| Transitional Housing                  | Short term tenancies, generally up to 18 months, where external support agencies refer potential tenants who have experienced domestic and family violence. Potential tenants participate in support programs and undertake transition planning to a longer term and/or permanent housing.  |

## Procedure

This document cannot be viewed in isolation. Instead, it forms part of a suite of documents all focused on improving the tenant experience and the quality of the homes we manage and own.

### **BaptistCare will ensure that we:**

- meet our obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010;
- provide a high quality, consistent maintenance service to our tenants and their families;
- keep all social housing properties at a benchmarked standard for safety, function and amenity;

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- retain and improve the quality of the homes we manage and own; and
- provide an efficient and effective maintenance service.

### Tenant Responsibilities

BaptistCare tenants have a responsibility to promptly report repairs and maintenance required to their property, and to allow access for completing required work. They will also be responsible for ensuring they notify BaptistCare of any damage to their property and for meeting the cost of repairing any damage caused by the neglect, misuse, wilful or accidental damage by a resident or visitor to the home.

Tenants are responsible for the costs and arranging any minor repairs in their dwelling including:

- replacement of light bulbs in the property;
- replacement of smoke alarm batteries;
- replacement of lost keys or resultant change of locks to doors and windows where keys are lost;
- any items that have been erected/installed/modified at the tenant's discretion that has been approved by BaptistCare e.g. air conditioning, shelving, appliances etc (noting that qualified tradespeople should be used and if damage is caused to the premises, tenant will make good the damage).

Tenants are also responsible for general upkeep and property care of their dwellings and any private open space attached to their dwelling.

### BaptistCare's responsibilities

BaptistCare is responsible for ensuring that maintenance is undertaken on the properties and common areas of the properties managed or owned by the organisation, to ensure that they are safe and all amenities are maintained in a proper working order. In doing so, maintenance is undertaken in three broad categories, being Planned Maintenance, Cyclical Maintenance and Responsive Maintenance.

BaptistCare defines **Planned Maintenance** as the scheduled replacement, upgrade or renovation of major items in a property. This includes Vacant Maintenance.

BaptistCare defines **Cyclical Maintenance** as a series of regular checks and inspections to ensure that properties comply with health and safety, legislative and duty of care obligations.

BaptistCare defines **Responsive Maintenance** as time critical repairs necessary to reinstate a building or component to a safe or functional level of service. This also includes routine repairs that cause inconvenience or could become a risk to health and safety if left unattended.

### Planned Maintenance

BaptistCare believes that a planned approach to maintenance, rather than a responsive approach, is more cost effective, delivers better maintenance solutions and causes less disruption to tenants.

Planned works are scheduled based on the following considerations:

- Any legislative requirements must be met.
- Life cycle upgrade timeframes as identified through our 3 yearly technical scoping inspections.

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- Risk assessment for each property undertaken through our technical scoping inspections.
- Overall budget allocation in line with our 20-year forecast model.

Wherever possible, BaptistCare will involve tenants in decisions about work proposed for their homes. For example, tenants may have a choice in the use of colours and materials used in our planned maintenance upgrades to their home. Throughout the process, tenants will be kept informed about what work is required and when it will be done.

Instead of replacing property elements like-for-like, when scoping planned maintenance works, BaptistCare will actively undertake value adding enhancements to improve amenity where economically viable, e.g. improving car-parking facilities, widening driveways and altering kitchen and bathroom layouts.

Scheduled maintenance is sometimes brought forward or deferred to suit tenant needs and other priorities. Properties that require upgrades for safety and security issues will be prioritised.

Where a property becomes vacant, BaptistCare will consider the feasibility of bringing forward the work to minimise the impact on future tenants. As a minimum, BaptistCare will ensure that the property is clean, safe and habitable for the next tenant. This includes:

- carrying out compliance assessments for smoke alarms, electrical safety and window restrictors
- ensuring that the property is appropriately secured and locks changed if required
- ensuring all appliances are functional.

### Cyclical Maintenance

Our cyclical maintenance program is divided into three categories as follows:

#### Lawns and Grounds Cleaning Program

Regular maintenance is carried out on common areas, grounds and/or gardens of apartments and townhouse complexes. Works include general upkeep and cleaning of internal common areas, lawns and gardens.

#### Compliance/Safety Program

This includes maintenance programs to ensure that BaptistCare meets legislative and regulatory requirements to maintain the safety and security of tenants. These include electrical safety, preparation of Annual Fire Safety Statements, smoke alarm inspections and lift safety.

#### Preventative Maintenance

BaptistCare defines preventive maintenance as regularly scheduled work that is undertaken to avoid breakdown and deterioration of the property. By undertaking preventative maintenance effectively, BaptistCare will reduce the amount of responsive, planned and structural work that may be required. Works include roof and gutter inspections, tree pruning and termite inspections.

### Responsive Maintenance

BaptistCare provides a responsive repairs and maintenance service, appropriate to both tenant and portfolio needs. Our responsive approach has four categories, which comply with obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. These categories are subject to regular review to ensure they are up to date with legislative requirements and meet customer expectations.

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| Repair Category  | Response Time  |
|--|--|
| <b>Emergency</b><br>Repairs that cause serious health or safety risk to the tenant and/or property, including gas leaks, broken sewer pipes or serious flooding.   | Within 8 hours of being notified   |
| <b>Urgent</b><br>Repairs that pose a serious health and safety risk or inconvenience to the tenant such as failure or breakdown of electrical or hot water supplies to the property.   | Within 48 hours of being notified  |
| <b>Priority</b><br>Repairs that may pose a risk to health and safety if left unattended within a reasonable period. These include limited malfunctions in electrical and water supplies such as a dripping tap or a plug socket not working.   | Within 5 days of being notified  |
| <b>Routine</b><br>Repairs that do not cause a health or safety risk such as tiling repairs and minor fencing repairs. BaptistCare will aim to complete non-urgent repairs and maintenance as promptly as possible, subject to the inconvenience to the tenant and the potential for the repair to become a risk to health and safety if left unattended. | 20 business days<br>(taking into account the age and remaining life of the property) |

For emergency repairs, a contractor will aim to attend and, wherever possible, complete all necessary work within four hours. In circumstances where this is not possible, the contractor will make sure that the fault is temporarily fixed and arrange for the permanent maintenance to be undertaken within the appropriate timeframe. The tenant will be informed why the issue could not be fixed immediately and when the work is likely to be completed.

Where a number of routine responsive maintenance requests are received in a short timeframe for a common area or block, BaptistCare reserves the right to “batch” these so that they are all completed together. This will be more cost effective and cause less disruption to our tenants.

### Access to Properties for Repairs

BaptistCare will abide by the Residential Tenancy Act in gaining access to properties requiring maintenance and reports. In general, if a tenant has requested the maintenance and, depending on the urgency, the tenant is required to be available to allow a contractor to enter to complete the repair. For planned or cyclical maintenance, BaptistCare will provide the required amount of notice.

### Requesting Repairs and Maintenance

It is important that tenants report any maintenance issues as quickly as possible. Timely reporting ensures tenants can continue to enjoy their home fully and can reduce the likelihood of repairs issues escalating.

Tenants will be provided with full details of how to request repairs and maintenance during office hours and for emergencies when signing their Lease. Information is also available within the property. Generally, requests are made to the site office employees.

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BaptistCare also provides a free interpretation service for tenants who are having difficulty communicating their repair or maintenance request.

Each repair request is assessed by BaptistCare, to determine the nature and priority of the work to be undertaken.

BaptistCare then assigns responsibility for completing the work to one of its contractors, or contacts the landlord or agent to inform them of the repair request for leasehold properties.

BaptistCare will ensure that there is clear communication with the tenant, contractor or landlord/agent throughout the repairs process to ensure that the work is completed in a timely and professional manner.

### Ensuring Quality Services

All employees and BaptistCare contractors must comply with BaptistCare's Code of Conduct. The Code outlines expectations of behaviours to ensure all residents are treated with respect and courtesy, and that they receive the best possible service with minimum disruption to their household.

In addition, BaptistCare undertakes a number of actions to ensure that maintenance services meet the acceptable standards:

- Tenant maintenance survey – BaptistCare sends out a survey to all tenants following responsive maintenance works. Where the tenant is contacted in line with continuous improvement processes.
- Inspections by BaptistCare technical officers – each month a sample of all responsive maintenance works completed are inspected.
- Submission of photographic evidence with all invoices from contractors to demonstrate works.
- Tenant sign off and certification that works have been carried out.
- Tenant feedback through our Annual Tenant Satisfaction Surveys, tenant representation on our Maintenance Management Committee and tenant advisory group structures.
- Internal audits to ensure we are providing an optimal service.

### Legislation

Housing Act 2001

Residential Tenancies Act 2010

## Related Policies & Procedures

Feedback

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