



“It’s more than just a job.” Here’s what a fulfilling career in aged care looks like.

Sam has recently celebrated twenty years of working in aged care. From humble beginnings, she’s moved from strength to strength, making a difference in the lives of hundreds of clients over the years.

Along the way, she’s overcome personal and professional challenges, including the ongoing juggle of family life and a demanding job.

Now a senior leader for one of the country’s largest care providers, Sam shares her inspiring story for anyone considering a meaningful career in this sector.



It's impossible not to warm to Sam the moment you meet her. She is all smiles, charismatic and bubbly – and it's easy to see why she's been so successful in the aged care sector. She's a people person, through and through. But she's serious when it comes to discussing the need for quality aged care. Sam's passion is to see older people living well in their own homes for as long as possible, with ongoing support and care from incredible staff.

“Success in any field is about knowing what you love, where you want to be, and how to get there,” she reflects.

For Sam, this has meant following her passion to provide dignity and independence for older people, via multiple roles, teams, and locations. Looking back over the last twenty years with BaptistCare, she shares her tips for anyone looking to make their mark in aged care.

Starting with a flexible role that fits around family life

Sam never felt some grandiose calling into aged care. She fell into it, initially, for the sake of convenience.

Starting out in a residential care home, Sam found that she could choose shifts that worked around childcare commitments for her son.

“My first role was about paying the bills,” said Sam. “But once I was in aged care, the bond with residents felt personal. I became passionate about giving dignity through end-of-life care and offering support to the resident’s family.”

“It’s about giving someone a gift. The gift of dignity while providing a caring and nurturing transition into the afterlife.”

“I remember the loss of my first resident,” she said. “A lady who was 102 years old. She had the most distinctive, infectious laugh. Her whole body would shake with laughter, and you couldn’t help but laugh with her.

“In her last few days, I checked on her regularly. She was mostly unconscious, but once, as I was holding her hand, she suddenly opened her eyes, looked at me, and laughed that beautiful laugh before going back to sleep. It was a special moment, and I felt privileged to be there.”



Sam celebrates 20 years of empowering BaptistCare at home clients to live well. Photo courtesy of Sam Galea.

Maintaining emotional boundaries

Sam says that dealing with the loss of residents took some getting used to, and the job is not for everyone. It can sometimes be a sad environment, watching your residents decline and witnessing the heartbreak of friends and families.

“It’s important to have emotional boundaries,” she says, “or you’ll spend your whole career grieving. It’s about giving someone a gift. The gift of dignity while providing a caring and nurturing transition into the afterlife.”

While Sam was falling in love with aged care, she was juggling her University degree and also working part-time as a waitress.

It was during this busy time that the BaptistCare Cowra manager approached Sam about an administrator role within Home Services (BaptistCare at home). Since Sam already had some aged care experience, she was a natural fit and soon joined the team.

Being ambitious to learn and grow

In her early years with BaptistCare, Sam moved across a broad range of home care roles. She progressed quickly from hands-on care work in clients’ homes, to facilitating care programs, to taking on the complex world of service scheduling.

“I come from a low socio-economic background and was always determined to rise out of that.”

“I was the first person in my extended family to go to University,” says Sam. “I was driven because I wanted my children to have a different kind of childhood to the one that I had experienced.”



Moving into senior management at BaptistCare at home was a pivotal moment in Sam's career, and one that allowed her to have a greater impact on many lives.

Sam's progression during these early years was also a testament to BaptistCare's people-first approach when it comes to their staff.

"It's challenging to progress without proper support and mentoring," she explains. "BaptistCare provided this in spades."

Learning how to "fail forward"

"In our team, we talk about 'failing forward,'" says Sam. "Because when we fail, there is a valuable opportunity to learn and grow."

Sam has learned this through personal experience. After trying to balance a demanding job, her studies, and a young family, something had to give, and she ended up failing her final University exam.

“The silver lining was that BaptistCare had my back,” she says. “They understood the relentless pressure I was under and wanted to help in some way, which meant a lot.”

BaptistCare’s Human Resources team wrote a letter to the University, imploring them to let Sam retake the exam. It worked; this time, she passed and completed her University degree.

“I felt so valued and supported,” said Sam. “I didn’t ask them to do it – it was all their idea. It was a watershed moment in my journey with BaptistCare.”



Sam worked hard to complete her University degree in the early days of her career. Photo courtesy of Sam Galea.

Embracing “imposter syndrome”: The move into management

Sam eventually moved into the position of manager at the Cowra home care office. Soon after, a large restructure saw this site merge with the

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Dubbo and Parkes home care offices. Sam became the head of this vast, newly amalgamated region.

“Sometimes I would get that imposter syndrome like I wasn’t meant to be there, or that I wasn’t good enough,” recounts Sam.

“But looking back, I think this is the best position to be in for growth – right on the edge of your comfort zone.”

Sam missed the hands-on care work but felt that a managerial position enabled her to help more people.



Sam with the rest of the BaptistCare at home Parkes team. Photo courtesy of Sam Galea.

“The decisions I make have a big impact. Instead of helping just ten or so clients in a year, I can help hundreds,” she explains.

BaptistCare supported Sam in learning the ins and outs of being a manager and funded her Diploma in Business.

“The Diploma gave me the tools I needed to succeed,” says Sam. “It was also a real confidence boost – I was someone they wanted to invest in. Again, I felt valued.”

Drawing on support during tough times

“I think it’s important to remember, particularly at work, that we are all three-dimensional people,” says Sam. “Our personal and professional lives merge sometimes, and that’s okay.”

Sam has suffered personal struggles at work over the years and has needed to draw on support from her team to get through. When her marriage broke down, she was ready to throw in the towel.

“It was all just too hard, and I decided to resign,” recounts Sam. “My manager was unbelievably supportive and understanding. He connected me with BaptistCare’s Employee Assistance Program and gave me six weeks of leave to recover and process. If I still wanted to resign after that period, then I could. It gave me the time out and the support that I needed. After the six-week break, I made the decision to stay.”

“Across every [BaptistCare] site, there is a current of genuine love and care for our people.”

Sam maintains the importance of communicating with your manager during a challenging period so that the organisation can support you in the best way.

“BaptistCare really has a “people-first” culture. Across every site, there is a current of genuine love and care for our people,” says Sam.

Keep throwing your hat in the ring

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Over her twenty years with BaptistCare, Sam has always put herself forward for new opportunities.

“Even when I know I’m probably not the best candidate for that particular role, I think throwing your hat in the ring still sends a message - that you’re keen to grow and progress,” says Sam. “That way, when the next opportunity arises, management will already have you in mind.”

This bold strategy has seen Sam promoted to many managerial positions across multiple locations. This included relocating to Canberra to manage home care services in the ACT.



Sam chats with colleagues Douglas Skinner (Manager Western Sydney), and Donna O'Brien (Manager Central West/Mid State).

“It was a big move, both personally and professionally, and one of my biggest challenges,” she reflects. “The team had recently suffered a terrible bereavement, with Tara Costigan having lost her life to domestic violence just one week before I started.

“I didn’t know Tara personally, but like everyone in the community, I was rocked by what happened. In a way, I felt like I could repay all that love and support I’d received during my own times of grief. I was able to help the team through the grieving process, giving them space to work through their emotions and loss.

Seeking a great mentor

Sam puts much of her professional success down to her mentors, who have provided much wisdom and guidance over the years.

“I always advise my team to find a good mentor,” she says, “someone you respect and can learn from.”

Sam drew on advice from her manager after returning to Cowra from Canberra after four years. She had needed to return so that her children could move more easily between both parents’ homes. Professionally, it had felt like a step backwards, but her mentor advised her to think of it as a sideways manoeuvre.

Sam took the advice and quickly threw herself into a new and exciting project: Project Ferrari.

“Unfortunately, it isn’t to do with driving fast cars,” she laughs. “But it is about making our scheduling system for home care services operate as efficiently as a sports car, and that’s how our General Manager came up with the name!

“It’s a role that taps into my love of the ‘big picture’. Scheduling is about juggling lots of different balls, all of which try to accommodate client care and connection, staff satisfaction, and financial efficiencies for the business.”

At BaptistCare, we like to stay focused on the ‘big picture.’ For us, this is about staying grounded and remembering our purpose – to provide loving, respectful care, and to empower our clients to live well.

It’s about people, first and foremost.

Come and work for us

We invite you to join one of Australia's largest and most trusted providers of aged care, delivering loving, respectful, and reliable care to 9,000 people in their homes across NSW and the ACT.

Our passionate team of staff live out the BaptistCare values of Love, Respect, Reliability, and Empowerment in the amazing work they do each day.

You'll receive a competitive salary with flexible hours that can fit around the other commitments in your life. We will support you, value you, and empower you to learn and progress throughout your time with us. Explore our current opportunities via the link below.

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