

What's it like to work in maintenance at an aged care home?

Why Tony decided to move into maintenance work within residential aged care homes after more than thirty years in the construction industry.



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After more than thirty years of working as a builder within the construction industry, Tony chose to make a sideways career move into maintenance work within residential aged care.

Like many before him, Tony had grown tired of the cut-throat, money-orientated culture that saturated many construction sites and sought work that was meaningful, rewarding, and yet still utilised his wide range of skills across building and maintenance.

Tony's strong work ethic, magnetic personality, and deep care for BaptistCare's elderly residents have meant a seamless transition into aged care, having been promoted from the role of Maintenance Supervisor to Property Area Manager after just a few short years in the industry. Tony's quick to add though that he's still learning, and often feels like he's "back to his 'L' plates" – something which, he says, keeps things interesting.

How does working in aged care home maintenance compare to your long career in construction?

I found that the world of construction was pretty cut-throat – there was very little job security, and many people would often wait too long to get paid.

To make matters worse, the volume of construction work grew significantly during the pandemic, leading to many people becoming overworked and overwhelmed. Standards were starting to deteriorate, and I began to feel quite isolated in my role. I craved more of a team spirit, with meaningful work that offered a better work-life balance.



Maintenance workers tend to the gardens at a BaptistCare residential aged care home

I genuinely knew nothing about aged care, but when I saw the job description of Maintenance Supervisor, and the BaptistCare motto - “Because we care” - something about it just spoke to me.

I was attracted to a position that was about contributing something meaningful; a much-needed service for residents.

From the moment I started at BaptistCare, I felt welcomed. The people who work here are so supportive and genuine in their approach. It was quite a culture shock for me!

What does a typical day as a care home maintenance worker look like?

Every residential aged care home is different, but there are some fundamentals that never change.

Each day is varied and fast-paced. Handyman work in aged care is so incredibly diverse, and no two days are the same – but it keeps things fresh and interesting. Some of the basic duties involve:

- *Using a software system to log maintenance issues for residents, employees, and management – this becomes our worklist and might include tasks like picture hanging, moving furniture, carrying out safety audits, or fixing one of the home’s adjustable beds.*
- *Prioritisation - it’s a key part of the role with many ad-hoc jobs also cropping up throughout the day. These might include responding to a fire panel that has been pressed or helping a family move in furniture for their loved one.*
- *Daily work health and safety walkthroughs.*
- *Managing and supervising the contractors who come on-site day to day. These might include fire safety contractors, electricians, and plumbers.*
- *Liaising with management and providing updates on live jobs – good communication skills are essential in this role.*
- *And of course, interacting with the residents is a major part of the job. You’ll often get chatting with residents as you fix something in their room, or if you pass someone whilst doing your safety checks. You get to know them and build relationships, which is incredibly rewarding.*

What qualifications do you need to work in residential aged care maintenance?



Many maintenance workers in aged care have transitioned from other industries, seeking more meaningful and rewarding work.

The job is more about transferrable skills than qualifications. You don't need a builder's licence or a degree, but it helps if you have handy-person skills, and some basic competency in maintenance.

You'll also need to be physically fit as there is a fair amount of manual work involved, such as moving furniture.

We often see retired engineers or builders apply for the role – even people who have worked in the swimming pool and air conditioning industries! We also have younger applicants wanting to learn in a supportive environment.

It's important that you have a certain level of maturity though when working with the elderly, and an understanding and respect for the work we do.

What do you love most about working in residential aged care maintenance?

For me, it's all about the social aspect. I love the reward factor of providing a meaningful service for residents. It might not be a big deal for us to move some furniture around, change the batteries in a TV remote, or hang up a few pictures, but for a resident, these things might just make their day.

I also enjoy problem solving – care home maintenance workers need to have a three-dimensional thought process, seeing an issue from all angles and being creative with solutions.

I love that the team here at BaptistCare treat each other so respectfully, there is so much care for one another. It's a great support network, and people are so willing to help you.

The culture of a workplace has a big impact on your general fulfillment in a role, and I think BaptistCare has a particularly supportive one.

What's one of the most challenging aspects of your job?

The job is often busy, and it can be a challenge when you feel stretched and pulled in all directions!

Sometimes, you might not even be able to get to your planned worklist if you've been managing ad-hoc issues all day. But that's just the job, and you learn how to prioritise.

It helps if you are a naturally calm and patient person, with strong organisational skills.

Is there room for development and growth?

Since joining BaptistCare, I've been amazed at the level of support and training available.

Mentoring is a big part of the culture here. I still turn to my own mentor for advice and support when I need it, even after having been in the role for over five years.

Some people have been with the organisation for decades and are always willing to answer your questions when you're not sure about something.

I also love providing that coaching role to more junior members of the team – it's rewarding to see them grow their skills and confidence over time.

Lastly, what advice would you give to someone considering a career in residential aged care home maintenance?

If you're looking for meaningful work and job security in an environment that really brings out the best in you, then my advice would be to just go for it – but have an open mind and be willing to learn.

The role is about wanting to provide a service that makes a genuine difference for residents, and so if you have that passion to help people, you're already halfway through the door.

Are you interested in working at BaptistCare?

If you are interested in learning more about working in an aged care home or would like to find a job, please contact us.