

YOUR GUIDE TO

PAINTING AGED CARE AND RETIREMENT FACILITIES

Higgins

Better painting management



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INTRODUCTION:

A high-quality paint job uplifts the profile of aged care facilities and retirement villages and demonstrates a genuine level of care for residents and their quality of life. [Maintaining the paintwork of your facility](#) can also improve the longevity of exteriors, reduce the frequency of extensive and costly maintenance, and mitigate the risk of building flaws that could jeopardise the health and safety of your residents and staff.

But when it comes to being proactive about your facility's painting maintenance, you probably have some questions and concerns before allowing contractors on-site. How disruptive will works be to your residents and staff? What are the risks that tools and equipment pose to people? How will you ensure that contractors follow agreed processes at all times to ensure the safety of those in your care?

These are all valid concerns, particularly when managing high-care facilities or organising for works to take place in residents' private homes. So how do you balance the health and safety of your residents and staff while also maintaining an exceptional facility at an affordable price? Most of it comes down to partnering with the right commercial painting contractor.

In this ebook, we present five case studies of successful projects that Higgins Coatings has undertaken in aged care and retirement facilities. These demonstrate how, with the [right preparation and experience](#), painting maintenance can be conducted in a safe, efficient and cost-effective manner. We also answer the most common project management and health and safety questions that retirement and aged care facility managers typically have when bringing contractors on-site.

Let's get started!



Case Study #1 –

JINDALEE AGED CARE RESIDENCE | CANBERRA

Jindalee Aged Care Residence is a family-owned-and-operated aged care facility in the Australian Capital Territory. It caters to over 160 residents with low-and-high-care needs and includes two secure dementia units.

Project scope

Higgins was initially engaged to complete internal repainting works. Following on from the project's success, the team was asked to repaint the facility's front elevation to refresh its external aspect.

Challenge

As the team was painting the front entrance of the facility, they were operating in a main thoroughfare for residents, staff and visitors. People would still need to be able to enter and leave the building in a safe manner throughout the project. This was made particularly challenging by the different access requirements for the front elevation. The team needed to work at heights, including from the roof, to complete the works, so greater caution had to be exercised when using equipment in the area. It was also paramount that there was minimal disruption to the occupants schedules.



“It’s about maintaining the ultimate level of safety, being aware of your surroundings and recognising that these are people’s homes.”

- Josh Cliff, Branch Manager at Higgins Canberra

Solution

The team of four from Canberra utilised Elevated Working Platforms (EWPs) and set up temporary anchor points on the roof in order to safely access all areas. To ensure the safety of residents, they set up exclusion zones around the EWPs that kept people away from the equipment, but still allowed unhindered access to the facility. Clear, bright signage was used to alert residents, staff and visitors to the presence of the workers and equipment in the area. The team also worked hard to coordinate the work schedule with the staff and the on-site facility manager to ensure minimal impact to the daily operations and lives of the residents.

Case Study #2 –

THE LAKES ESTATE | MELBOURNE

The Lakes Estate, located in north-western Melbourne, offers residents both independent living villas and serviced or independent apartments, as well as a range of community and recreational facilities.

Project scope

Higgins was engaged to complete a full external repaint of The Lakes Estate, including villas, apartments, garden areas and the community centre.

Challenge

As the team were working around people's homes and properties, it was critical that safety procedures were followed in order to minimise both disruption and risk to the residents. This was also particularly challenging around the recreational facilities, including the library, community centre and gardens, which all remained open and active during the works.

Additionally, the Melbourne team encountered some difficulties accessing certain areas of the village, which meant that machinery had to be brought on site, adding another level of safety considerations to the project.





“When Stockland works with Higgins they know that they’ll be getting a reliable painting service with a higher level of communication and professionalism.”

- Matthew Eastmure, Branch Manager at Higgins Dandenong

Solution

Communication was critical to ensuring the safe completion of the project. The Higgins Melbourne team had a full-time foreman on-site for the duration of the works, providing a consistent point of contact for the facilities manager and helping to direct traffic. The foreman was also able to help with communication with the residents, providing notice of the planned works and any changes, as well as reassurance where necessary.

Areas that were being worked on were also sectioned off from the public. This was particularly important for the use of EWP's and other machinery that was brought in to enable the painters to access certain areas.

Dulux collaborated with Higgins to select the appropriate colours and paint for the project. Thanks to their knowledge of the coatings and how they are applied to different finishes, they were essential in helping plan the works schedule that enabled the project to be completed on time and to a high standard.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS FOR PAINTING RETIREMENT AND AGED CARE FACILITIES

High-quality paintwork should never come at the expense of the [health and safety of your residents and staff](#). That's why it's important to partner with contractors who have prior experience in the aged care and retirement industry and who don't cut corners.

Below are the main health and safety precautions to take when working in retirement and aged care facilities. When choosing a contractor, make sure that they meet the requirements and have tried and tested safety processes in each of these areas.

1. QUALIFICATIONS

Painting contractors should have national police checks and working in aged care clearances before coming on-site. Vaccinations must also be up-to-date, including flu and COVID-19 shots, for all personnel that enter aged care facilities.

As well as specific requirements for working in your industry, you should also check that your contractor has the right painting licences to operate in your state, as well as other qualifications that show a commitment to work health and safety. Higgins is the proud owner of an internationally recognised



[tri-certification accreditation](#) in quality, safety and the environment. This means that we have been independently assessed and found to comply with the standards ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001. We also meet the AS/NZS 4801 standard for managing hazards and [our company work health and safety policy](#) is freely available for people to view on our website.

Asking for [references from your contractor](#) is a good way to gain evidence from previous clients that they deliver quality work and provide a reliable, safe service. Contractors from [well-established, reputable companies](#) with prior experience in the aged care and retirement sector should also already be aware of legal requirements and able to demonstrate compliance. More than that, a good contractor will be happy to go above and beyond to cater to the unique health and safety demands of your particular facility. At Higgins, we ensure that each contractor is qualified for the job by properly

inducting them before they step foot in aged care environments. This means that you have informed, skilled and knowledgeable people on site at all times throughout the painting project.

2. RISK ASSESSMENTS

A good painting contractor will conduct a worksite risk assessment before a project commences. The assessment should evaluate the proposed work and environment to minimise risk and identify the best possible method of delivery to ensure the ongoing health and safety of all parties.

Risk assessments should be supplied to the facilities manager so that you have full visibility of the project and can use this knowledge to manage your site and stakeholders. If the project changes significantly throughout the work, then a new risk assessment may need to be conducted. A reliable contractor will be proactive in providing this information to you.

3. PAINT

Some paints may pose a health risk to vulnerable residents due to the fumes they emit affecting indoor air quality. For this reason, it's important to carefully consider the right type of paint for your facility. Your contractor or paint supplier can provide expert advice on the best coatings for retirement and aged care settings. For example, low-VOC paints and non-enamel paints are suitable for these environments as they are safer for people with allergies, respiratory problems and other underlying health conditions.

Adequate ventilation is also critical when completing paintwork, especially in retirement and aged care facilities that remain operational throughout the project. That's why it's important to make sure enough windows and doors are open to enable air circulation. In a high-care setting, such as a nursing home or dementia ward, your painting contractor should work with you to ensure that vulnerable residents aren't being put at risk by leaving particular

doors or windows open. The solution may involve blocking off access to an area of a building for a period of time so that adequate ventilation can be maintained without compromising the safety of residents.

Finally, your contractor should also take into account how they safely dispose of waste and leftover paint so it doesn't pose a risk to your site. At Higgins, we clean our brushes off-site and take away any leftover materials or waste to dispose of in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

4. ACCESS

Painting contractors may be required to work at heights or in confined spaces, or use ladders, EWPs or other equipment to access your buildings. Extra precautions must be taken in these cases to not endanger residents. This can be done through having clear barriers or meshing that cordon off areas and set up exclusion zones that can only be accessed by the painting contractors. This reduces the risk of residents accidentally coming in contact with dangerous equipment or tools.

At Higgins, we also use 'spotters'. This is a worker whose sole role is to watch over worksite boundaries and ensure no residents accidentally enter the area or come within harm's way. With a spotter, the rest of the team can focus on completing the work efficiently and carefully, knowing that someone's full attention is on looking for unexpected risks and ensuring the ongoing safety of the site.

5. TOOLS

The last thing you want is a resident picking up a tool that's been left lying around and accidentally hurting themselves with it. For this reason, a good contractor should have a system in place to ensure that all tools are accounted for and used in a safe manner. At Higgins, we employ systems such as checking in and out tools each day to ensure none are missing, tethering tools to belt clips so they're always safely attached to a contractor and locking tools away when they're not in immediate use.



6. TOOLBOX TALKS

Toolbox talks are another method used by contractors to ensure that everyone on their team is up-to-date with the latest safety procedures for your site, whether that be a session on working in dementia wards or a reminder on the best practices for using EWP's safely. A company that holds regular toolbox talks demonstrates its commitment to safety in a continuous manner, rather than a box to be ticked at the beginning of a project. At Higgins, we have also found it helpful to invite facilities managers to present at these meetings, particularly with regards to any specific safety procedures that your site has or unexpected changes to how the work must be carried out. This is just one of the ways that we build trust and ensure clear communication between the facilities manager and our team.

Working in dementia wards

In dementia wards, Higgins contractors have particular procedures they follow to ensure safety in these sensitive, high-care and high-risk environments. This includes operating in secured areas with spotters to ensure confused residents aren't leaving with contractors, locking rooms where possible to ensure no one enters working zones, making sure fewer tools are being used and having them attached to contractors so as to not end up in the wrong hands, and of course, working very closely with staff, nurses and facility managers to maintain the utmost level of safety throughout.

Case Study #3 –

PARKLANDS RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITY | TOWNSVILLE

Parklands Residential Aged Care Facility is a residential retirement living facility in Townsville that includes dementia and palliative care wards.

Project scope

Higgins was re-engaged to help restore the look of the facility through a full external repaint after past successful projects were carried out.

Challenge

A key challenge within this project was the need to work in the highly secure dementia ward, as well as operate in palliative care areas. This difficulty was emphasised by the need to use EWP's in and around a building that remained an operational high-care facility throughout the entire project.



“Given the environment we were working in, we had to ensure the residents’ safety and give extra consideration to the best possible way to go about the repaint. By collaborating with Queensland Government Health and the nurses and professionals at Parklands, we were able to safely complete the job.”

- Adam Kennie, Project Manager at Higgins Townsville

Solution

A worksite risk assessment for the whole project was conducted at the very beginning and then reviewed weekly from thereon. Higgins also held regular toolbox talks with the painters and facilities manager to address particular safety concerns. To avoid any dangerous tools falling into the hands of residents, painters tethered them to their belts or locked them away when not in use. Daily checks that all tools were accounted for were also conducted.

Areas that were being worked on were cordoned off with hazard tape and bollards, while temporary fencing was installed for external sites. We also used spotters in the high-care areas to ensure residents didn't accidentally wander into an area that was unsafe for them.

3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES FOR PAINTING AGED CARE AND RETIREMENT FACILITIES

A high-quality painting project can be the most cost-effective way to maintain the fresh look of your buildings, keep staff and residents happy and attract new residents. However, improving your facilities while minimising disruption to your residents' day-to-day activities requires careful planning. Below are our top three project management best practices that we recommend – and follow ourselves – when managing painting projects in aged care and retirement settings.

1. SCHEDULE WORK TO ENSURE MINIMAL DISRUPTION

It is paramount that paintwork is carefully scheduled to minimise the impact on staff providing clinical care, as well as to avoid major disruption to your residents' lives. The best way to achieve this is to hire painting contractors who are willing to work closely with facilities managers to design a planned schedule of works, while also being flexible and adaptable to change. This enables clear, advanced notice to staff and residents about when works are expected to take place, ensuring the project can run smoothly.

At Higgins, we typically use a phased approach so that only certain areas are being worked on at any one time. We also create fluid work schedules with facilities managers to ensure that we can finish the project in a timely manner, while still being able to accommodate any sudden changes that may arise, as is often the case in aged care and retirement environments.

2. COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS

Communication is key to any painting project, but it's particularly important in retirement villages and aged care facilities, where we are coming into people's homes, many of whom are vulnerable or facing health challenges. All Higgins workers understand how crucial it is for residents to be well-informed of any potential disruptions to their day-to-day lives. We work collaboratively with facilities managers to quickly and courteously update residents regarding planned work and any changes to schedules via bulletin notices and mail drops.

Part of clear communication is also about having the appropriate safety signage in place and obvious demarcation of zones that are temporarily out of bounds. At Higgins, all our signage is bright, easy to understand and meets internationally recognised work health and safety standards.

3. AN ON-SITE FOREPERSON

Having an on-site foreperson helps to extend communication and maintain safety in an ever-changing environment. The foreperson is there to ensure the execution of the painting project while having close control over all safety measures, including notifying residents and staff of changes to the schedule of work. They liaise with the facilities managers, assist in the way you communicate with residents and help direct traffic.

Higgins employees are well-versed in the retirement and aged care sector and have a deep understanding of the intricacies of painting projects in this area. They understand that these are the residents' homes and they work hard to respect each person, communicate clearly and ensure everyone's safety.

How Higgins goes above and beyond for retirement residents

At Higgins, all of our painting contractors must obtain national police checks, have clearances for working in the aged care sector and undergo industry-specific inductions. Anyone on-site will be in a Higgins branded uniform and carry Higgins ID cards, making them easily recognisable to staff and residents. Not all of these are regulatory requirements, however we do this to demonstrate our commitment to delivering the best outcomes for the industries and people we serve. Retirement and aged care living can be a complex sector because residents may be in a more vulnerable or health-compromised position. We believe it's important that the right team is on the ground with full knowledge of the aged care sector's requirements, which is why we invest so heavily in ensuring our painters have the experience and understanding to always deliver successful and safe outcomes.

Case Study #4 –

CLAYTON CHURCH HOMES | ADELAIDE

Clayton Church Homes is a residential aged care and retirement operator with 16 sites around South Australia. Each facility is different and may include independent or supported living arrangements, dementia programs, palliative care and a range of activities and services. Their properties also range in size from 60 to 120-person facilities.

Project scope

Higgins were approached by Clayton Church Homes to provide ongoing painting maintenance across all their sites, including an external repaint of all properties and an internal repaint of five facilities.

Challenge

The priority within this project was ensuring minimal disruption to the properties' residents. Schedules across every site had to be provided to the facilities managers, as well as advanced notification to residents in the non-high-care sections. This proved challenging to coordinate across the different sites, particularly when also incorporating the unique access requirements of each facility. Unfavourable weather conditions, positive COVID-19 cases and other situations also meant that plans often changed suddenly. This was all further complicated by the additional health and safety concerns of managing a painting project during the pandemic.

Clayton Church Homes also has an ongoing plan with Higgins to paint rooms within 48 hours of them becoming vacant, so that beds can be provided to incoming residents quickly. This requires a high degree of flexibility and places additional pressure on the team to manage work schedules well.



“Higgins have been amazing to work with. In the provision of painting services and minor building works at our 16 sites across SA, they have always delivered projects on time and on budget, to the highest quality and with service that has been exemplary. The Higgins staff are courteous and professional at all times; their approach to customer service is truly exceptional.”

- Chief Operating Officer at Clayton Church Homes

Solution

As with any Higgins project, the work began with thorough risk assessments and equipping the team with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) not only for painting, but also COVID-19. Masks, frequent sanitisation and social distancing measures were incorporated to minimise the risk of the virus spreading, and all our painters had to be fully vaccinated to ensure the safety of vulnerable residents.

A fluid work schedule was implemented to incorporate the project requirements across the different sites in accordance with the managers, staff and residents' needs. At times, this involved night shifts so that our team could paint areas such as the kitchen when they weren't in use, ensuring this essential service would be fully operational again by morning. We also take care when scheduling our workforce to ensure we can continue to meet our ongoing agreement regarding painting of rooms, allowing us to be responsive to our customers' needs.

Other safety measures that were implemented to ensure the health and safety of residents included installing barriers and meshing to demarcate active worksites, locking rooms that were in the process of being painted, using low-VOC paints to protect residents with allergies or respiratory conditions, and ensuring adequate circulation and ventilation at all times.

Case Study #5 –

GLENAEON VILLAGE | SYDNEY

Glenaeon Village is a retirement facility offering a range of independent living options including apartments, villas, townhouses and penthouses with views of bushlands and the ocean.

Project scope

Higgins partnered with Lendlease to provide a painting maintenance plan that would ensure Glenaeon Village stays as pristine as the views the premise boasts.

Challenge

One of the immediate challenges in this project was the relatively short time frame that the works had to be conducted in. Given that retirement village residents are typically quite active on their properties and across the common facilities, this meant that communication had to be clear, rapid and consistent to ensure a smooth project and minimal disruption to residents' daily lives.

Another significant challenge for this project was to tie the appearance of the older buildings together with that of the newer ones through a unified colour palette.



“We are struggling to find any faults! Higgins Coatings’ service and care to our village was excellent. The Higgins staff were with us every step of the way. The operations team of Higgins were outstanding to work with. Higgins places safety as their number one priority, with a strong focus on excellent customer service. It is a pleasure to work with them and we look forward to many more successful projects at Glenaeon.”

- Assistant Village Manager at Glenaeon Village

Solution

The Sydney team worked closely with the facilities manager to understand, manage and mitigate the impacts on residents and their lifestyles when preparing the work schedule. There was a full-time foreman on-site to maintain high communication levels, which was essential in the ever-changing retirement environment. This role included overseeing the execution of the works, ensuring appropriate safety measures in place, as well as consistently notifying residents of new developments in the project. Because of the high level of project management, Higgins was able to complete the job in less than six months.

Colour consultants were also engaged to create a new, more streamlined colour palette to ensure that the older and newer buildings paired well together.

CONCLUSION

Between minimising health and safety risks, saving time on extensive repairs and maintenance, and increasing the longevity of buildings, regular painting maintenance of your aged care or retirement village will lead to better outcomes for residents and staff, old and new.

The best way to keep your facility's paintwork in good condition is to work with skilled professionals who have experience in the aged care sector. By partnering with reliable and knowledgeable painting contractors, who understand the specific requirements of working in a retirement or aged care home, you can have peace of mind that your residents will be safe and respected while the job is being done.

Higgins Coatings is an Australia-wide premier contractor for painting and maintenance services. We have significant experience in the retirement and aged care industry and so we understand the specific needs of these facilities and can help you update your paintwork or turnover villas and units quickly and safely. Our painting maintenance plans can also be tailored to meet the unique requirements of your facility, with a heightened level of care and consideration for the safety of your residents and staff. And thanks to our [ISO tri-certification accreditation](#) in safety, quality, and the environment, you can be confident that you've engaged the best commercial painting contractors in Australia. [Contact Higgins today for a quote.](#)

[Contact us](#)