

# Countdown to Open For Inspection Day

## 6-8 weeks out

### Time for a fix up – exterior checklist

You have taken the first step and decided to sell your house, but what now?

Let's start by evaluating your property for repairs and maintenance issues.

Have you spent months, maybe years overlooking your worn-out windows and cracked pathways, with the idea that you'll get around to fixing them one day? Well, now that you've completed your roof checklist, it's time to start focusing on the rest of your exterior. A little work goes a long way when it comes to making a good first impression with potential buyers, and it's these aspects of your exterior that buyers will base their decisions on. So, let's start fixing up with this helpful checklist.

- Do not underestimate a nice looking front door. Repaint or stain the front door if needed and clean or replace door hardware. Ensure the doorbell works and spruce up the front entry with a new door mat, and accessorize with pot plants.
- If there are any cracks in the driveway or sidewalk, repair and resurface them. Power washing these areas will also make a big impact.
- If your fence or gate is looking worse for wear, consider repainting, staining, or replacing it if necessary.
- Replace or fix up worn out doors, windows and screens to create a sense of a well-kept property. Don't forget to make the windows sparkling clean.
- Is the exterior of your home looking dull and faded? A simple power wash will make a big difference. If this isn't enough, you'll want to assess if it needs a new coat of paint. Remove any mold also.
- You might also want to power wash your garage door or shed if an inspection deems it necessary.
- Remove mildew and rust from your air-conditioning units and ensure they work. They will be a big selling point in the summer months.
- Great outdoor lighting is something buyers look for. Repair lights or touch up any rust, consider new lighting if it's underwhelming.

### First things first when preparing to sell - roofing checklist – exterior checklist

Congratulations! You have taken the first step and decided to sell your house, but what now? The process of selling your home can seem a little overwhelming, so before anything else, it is a good idea to follow a basic checklist for the selling process. Let's begin with a thorough review of the exterior of the property, starting with the roof. Roof repair is one fix that increases both market value and curb appeal. So, let's get started...

- If your roof is nearing the end of its life, you should think about replacing it before selling. Some things to look for when determining if your roof is in good shape:
  - Check for rotting wood at the eaves and underneath the gutters.
  - Inspect the attic space to see if there is any rotted wood or wet spots.
  - Inspect the ceilings in your house for water marks or other leaks.
- Repair leaky gutters and downpipes or replace if needed to ensure that water drains properly. If the colour has faded or chipped, touch up with a fresh coat of paint. This will show potential buyers that the property is well cared for.
- Fascias are commonly overlooked so make sure you clean them up and apply a fresh coat of paint.
- Cracked tiles on roofs should be replaced, along with any rusted iron sheets on metal roofs. New ridge capping on tiled roofs will also significantly improve your home's curb appeal.
- Repaint or repair eaves. A good pressure clean will also make a big difference.

- You'll want to be sure that your house passes a building inspection by addressing any electrical or plumbing issues now, so if in doubt, call a licenced tradesman for further investigation. Make sure all lighting is working to avoid any last minute surprises.
- On that note, if you need professional help, don't forget to start booking your trades now.

### Preparing your landscaping – exterior checklist

When a buyer approaches your property, one of the first things they will notice is the front yard; are the garden beds thriving, is the lawn well maintained? Landscaping determines whether your home feels inviting from the outside. So, planning ahead is important if you want your garden to be flourishing once it's time to sell. Follow this checklist to ensure you make the best first impression and invite buyers into your home.

- Tidy up garden edging and plant flowers to brighten things up. Choose plants to complement the style of the property, for example, roses around a cottage style home or natives for a rural setting.
- Trim all bushes, shrubs, ground covers and hedges and remove dying foliage from plants in all garden beds. Simply having your garden beds updated, as well as mulching to make them look well cared for will promote new growth and revive any tired garden.
- Do your retaining walls look weathered? Repaint or re-stain timber walls if needed. If your concrete retaining walls have minor cracks, you can fill them using a special epoxy or a concrete repair kit. Replace cracked or damaged stone walls where needed, and, if you have rotting or warped timber retaining walls, replace those areas with new timber.
- Tidy and sweep outdoor areas and brighten up the balcony and entranceways with potted plants.
- If your lawn is looking unsightly, turf is relatively inexpensive and can make a huge impact.
- Use a power washer to clean paved surfaces. With very little time or effort, you can make dirty surfaces look brand new.
- Maybe it's time for a letterbox makeover? Repair, or repaint if sun and weather damaged. Or, it may be time for a new one. Choose one that matches the colour of your exterior.

### Garages and Workshops

Garages and workshops are areas that can really impress potential buyers, more than you might think.

- To minimise clutter consider selling all items you no longer need. Put them aside for a garage sale. Tidy up remaining items by placing neatly on shelves or packing in containers. Sweep away cobwebs and wash the floor
- Remove grease or oil spills from carport or garage floor and paint it
- If you have a workshop, make it look clean and tidy.
- Check garage doors are oiled and check automatic doors are in working order

### Ready to entertain – exterior checklist

Whether you have a small or large outdoor space to work with, it's important that you showcase it in the best light possible. The Australian lifestyle means people look at decks and outdoor areas as extensions of their homes, often spending most of their time basking by the pool or enjoying a snag on the barbeque with family. So, with that in mind, the following checklist will ensure your outdoor area is a stand out for potential buyers.

- A swimming pool or entertaining area are great assets for selling a home. It's important to have the pool clean, clear and debris free. Compliment the pool with a nice deckchair or two, and use big, modern pots containing luscious fresh plants and place them around the pool area or deck.
- Inspect all of your exterior decks to see if they are in need of a good power wash and stain. A freshly stained deck can make the space look brand new.

- Inspect underneath your decks. This is a typical area that is overlooked by the average homeowner. Don't leave potential buyers with a nasty surprise, make sure this area is cleared of any junk.
- Buyers don't want to see your kid's toys, broken trampoline or tools lying around. Clearing up the entire outdoor area will allow buyers to imagine their own personal items in the space.
- If you have a barbecue, be sure it's clean and any accessories are packed away. Buy a new barbecue cover if needed.
- Outdoor furniture can start to look a little worn over time. Upgrade to fresh, bright pieces that invite buyers to imagine themselves enjoying the space.
- Make sure the garbage and recycling bins are unobtrusive, clean and tidy. This is a good time to get rid of any unwanted bits. Maybe it's also time for a garage sale?

## 5 weeks out

### Beautiful on the inside - Interior checklist

While you can't change your property's location or aspect, you can definitely change the way it looks and feels for the better. Now that you've created an exterior that's going to invite potential buyers in, it's time to move inside the home, and start focusing on areas that need work. Does the living room need repainting? Is the carpet looking shabby? This checklist will help to pinpoint areas for improvement and get you one step closer to having your home ready to sell.

**Walls** – Buyers usually spend a lot of time inspecting walls and floors. Paint is one of the cheapest, easiest ways to update the look of your home before you list it. Lighter and neutral colours are preferred. Paint the rooms that you think need it and make sure any dints or holes are patched up first – you may need to hire a professional for this. Clean all fingerprints and scuffmarks off walls, skirting and architraves. Also, it's best to remove wallpaper in case your love for florals is not shared by potential buyers. The easiest way is to steam it off by using an inexpensive wallpaper remover steamer.

**Floors** – What type of floor does your property have? Does it suit the climate? Is it in good enough condition for the property to sell? If you are unsure, seek advice from your real estate agent. You may need to repair timber flooring by polishing or replacing. If you have carpet, you might consider replacing it if it's looking worn and stained, or, have them shampooed and treated for stains. You should also look for chipped or broken tiles and have them replaced, and clean or touch up dirty grouting.

**Entrance & Hallways** – Does your entranceway create a good first impression? Does it feel welcoming? Remove clutter and unnecessary furniture to make the area feel spacious and clean. Tidy around and under the stairways. Replace, clean or remove worn out rugs, and why not throw down a runner carpet in the hallway to add softness and warmth. Place a vase of fresh flowers on a table or a large potted plant on the floor to add colour and life. You could also include a basket or a rack for storing shoes and umbrellas.

**Doors** – When it comes to internal doors there's no need to replace them unless completely necessary. Refresh the doors with new door handles and hinges, keep them simple and modern. With a little paint, you can freshen up the woodwork and hide scuff marks.

### Clean and working? Interior checklist

While some things are not so obvious to the average homeowner when preparing to sell, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that a clean, tidy home with everything working is a must-do when trying to get the best possible selling price. So, follow this interior checklist to help keep you on the right track.

**Lights and fans** – If there's a switch, it should do something. Don't leave any concerns about your electrical system, so make sure all fixtures work properly and safely.

Make sure your bulbs are working and replace outdated lighting with a new and modern style if needed. The same goes with fans, make sure they work and if they look like they come from the 1970's, then replace with white modern fans.

**Fireplace** – It's a great idea to make sure that your fireplace is in tip-top shape when you are selling. Fireplaces are features that draw buyers, especially in winter or in cooler locations. Make sure it has been recently serviced or cleaned, repaint if needed, and shine glass on combustion fires and accessories.

**Air-conditioning units** – Whether they're window units or central air conditioning, your AC units need to be functioning efficiently in order to improve the value of your home. Make sure you maintain its coils, and clean filters and fins. Call on a professional to do this for you if needed. When your AC has been well maintained, potential buyers will have no need to worry about its longevity.

**Linen press and storage** – When looking at a house, most people will open wardrobes and the linen press to see how efficient the storage is. Remove all items, clean shelves, throw out old sheets and towels, fold and repack neatly. Get rid of any unwanted odours by placing some lavender in the space.

**Smoke detectors** – Make sure your smoke detectors are working and replace batteries if needed. In some states, by law you need to have working smoke detectors before transferring the sale of your home.

## 4 weeks out

### Bathroom blunders – your repair checklist

Where do family members spend a lot of time, maybe too much time? The bathroom of course. Just like kitchens, another standout area for potential buyers is where our mornings begin and our long days' end. Unfortunately, the bathroom can often be an area that is overlooked. So, it's time to pay special attention to this part of the house and check these items off your list.

- Replacing or repairing old, leaky taps is a must-do.
- Make an old bathroom come to life by putting down new grouting if necessary or bleach and scrub existing grout.
- Repair or replace damaged and chipped tiles on the floors, walls, and other surfaces.
- Give the bathroom an instant upgrade with a new toilet seat and shower curtain.
- Old bathroom ventilation fans can be a huge eye sore. Replacing the fan with a new, energy efficient fan will look and perform better. At the very least, repaint discoloured fans.
- Clean lights if dirty or replace with modern feature lights, to add 'wow factor'.
- Mouldy or old shower screens are a big turn off. Ensure your screen works smoothly. Bleach and scrub hard to reach areas and renew discoloured silicon.
- Framing or updating your vanity mirror can instantly modernize your bathroom. This is a quick DIY bathroom project that can really impress.

- A fresh coat of paint on the bathroom walls is another must-do. Pick a neutral, light color that matches the current fixtures and creates a greater sense of space.
- Dingy, old bathtubs can put a potential buyer off the entire space. Refinishing a bathtub cuts down on the costs of remodeling your bathroom and can have a huge impact.
- Are your door handles outdated or worn? Replace if needed or give them a good shine.
- Clean, repair or repaint the vanity or replace if damaged. Your local hardware store will have a range of vanities to suit all budgets. Keep it simple and modern.
- Replace the basin if cracked, or conceal tiny chips with touch-up paint. Renew discoloured silicon for a cleaner look.
- Ensure towel racks are securely fastened to the walls. If outdated, replace with new, modern racks that match your existing fixtures.

### **The room that sells a home – kitchen checklist**

You have probably heard time and time again that kitchens sell homes. After all, it is the heart of the home, right? With that in mind, now is the time to focus on one of the most important areas in the home. While a kitchen can be an expensive area to renew, an upgrade doesn't mean you have to start a major renovation. We provide a kitchen checklist that will help you identify where to make improvements, so you are only spending where it is most needed.

- If your outdated kitchen countertops are in need of a facelift, don't think you will have to replace them. Applying a new coat of specialized paint will make a huge impact. Only use product from Hardware stores specifically made for this task, as ordinary paint will not last. You can also call a kitchen restoration or renovation company to quote. Budget fixes are available.
- If your kitchen knobs and handles are from your granny's era, install new ones. They are relatively inexpensive to replace, easy to install and have a major impact on the final look.
- Fix, replace or paint worn out cupboards and cupboard doors in modern neutral colours that appeal to the majority of buyers and go with your décor. Painting is the cheapest option. Replace old hinges and tracking and make sure that everything is in good working order.
- Do you want your kitchen to sparkle? Repair leaking taps and/or replace old sinks and taps with new ones. A good hardware store will have a range of affordable sinks, taps and tiles, and will often have an install service.
- Old appliances, such as dishwashers, will often need replacing. Choose water-efficient appliances that reduce your homes running costs. A stainless steel option is the most popular at the moment. Ensure that the oven and cooktop hotplates work, as buyers will often check these.
- Pay attention to the grout in kitchen floor tiles and splash backs. Clean it or replace it. This will help reflect the overall care you have given to your home.

Make this room an attractive, clean and functional space and appealing to cooks.

## 3 weeks out

### **The countdown is on – The photographer is coming!**

With just 3 weeks to go until viewing day, it is now time to get down to the nitty gritty of organising and styling your home for the photographer.

Put personal taste aside and style your property in a way that buyers will fall in love with. Create a consistent flow throughout your home from room to room.

### **Organise your Home Office**

- Clear shelving and the desk by packing away excess books, ornaments and personal photos
- File away personal documents and items that you want hidden
- Depersonalise and create order, this will help potential buyers imagine their own belongings in this space
- Add something eye catching as a focal point like an art work, décor piece or potted plant. Remember it's not about spending on designer pieces, but creating a designer look on a budget

### **The Bedrooms – Prioritise what the photos will show**

- Create a room that is clean, organised and spacious. So, pack away excess clutter, toys, clothes and posters. Twelve pieces on display is enough drama to showcase a room
- If you don't have time to sort through clothes and declutter your wardrobes, do this after the photos have been taken.
- Time for a surface clean – windows, skirting and walls will need a good wipe down
- Clear dressers and shelving and add a few accent décor pieces or toys/books only
- Clean or add new bedding (white is a favourite) and add a touch of colour through cushions or throws
- If you have floor boards, you may add a rug. Visit discount stores such as Kmart or Spotlight for neutral and inviting rugs
- Style the room with lamps and soft furnishings. Again, utilise discount stores for cushions, throws, flowers, candles and vases. Keep it simple, neutral and fresh. Don't forget to find inspiration online or in home magazines

### **Laundry**

- Clean the surfaces of the washing machine and dryer so they shine
- Clean and shine the sink and splashback removing soap and splash marks
- Make a space for dirty clothes and the ironing pile of clothes to go in the last minutes before open for inspection i.e. an attractive basket

### **Living, Dining and Kitchen styling for the photographer**

Now it's time to style the rooms that can really tug at the heart strings of potential buyers – the kitchen, dining and living rooms.

### **Style your Kitchen**

- Clear the bench tops and clean all surfaces thoroughly.
- Leave a handful of strategically placed accessories to create a homely feel - a potted plant can add life to a kitchen
- Remove pictures, photos and magnets etc. Potential buyers need to envision their own belongings in the space
- Remove compost and rubbish bins for the photos
- Pack away rarely used appliances, cooking utensils and pans

### Living and Dining

- Remove all mismatched furniture and accessories
- Clear off shelves and restyle with less décor. Utilise discount stores for affordable accents such as candles and vases. Keep it simple and neutral.
- Fresh flowers in a vase are always a great, easy option for styling
- Your sofa needs to be clean and fresh looking. Add a slip cover, some new cushions and a throw, don't go over the top with colour choices or patterns. You can seek inspiration online and from home magazines
- Pack away your book piles and perhaps leave a few for accessorising
- Clear out stacks of magazines and hobby materials. Any children's toys can be placed in a basket. This will create a larger sense of space and minimise visual clutter
- Strategically place your window dressings for best light and privacy
- Is there sufficient lighting? Rearrange lighting to ensure that the rooms are well lit at any time of day or night
- Keep artwork minimal on walls, and choose areas that require livening up
- Examine walls and woodwork for dirt and chips, and give these areas a touch-up or clean

## 2 weeks out

### Decluttering for Inspections – Inside cupboards

Living in an age of consumerism, it's all too easy to accumulate various objects that are no longer needed. But when it comes to preparing your home for sale, clutter can really distract buyers from the positive features of your property. By removing any extra furniture, and bits and pieces gathered over time, you will allow your property to truly shine.

### Back to the Kitchen

- Sort, clean and organise the contents of every cupboard, pantry and the fridge – throw away outdated products
- Empty a drawer and leave it available to place items in last minute, on Open for Inspection days.
- Keep your kitchen odour free by opening windows right up to inspection days.

### The Bedrooms

- Go through clothes and any items you have stored in wardrobes. People will open cupboards and wardrobe doors during inspections, so they must be tidy and odour free.
- Sort and place loose items in boxes or tubs and return them to the wardrobe. This makes moving easy too.

### All other Cupboards and Linen Press

- A sense of space is on everyone's wish list when purchasing so make your storage areas appear ample by tidying and decluttering
- If you don't need all those winter coats or old suits in your cupboard, pack them away.
- Wipe down and tidy just in case the buyers open to take a peek inside your cupboards. Plastic baskets are great for organising belongings into piles
- Straw or cane baskets look great on top of cupboards or in a corner to store bits and pieces
- Make sure cupboards are odour free, place lavender in the space or air out cupboards by keeping the doors open for a day or two
- Remove, refold and repack all sheets and towels.

By starting the decluttering process ahead of time, you will be in a really good position to finish packing when the time comes, and it will be less overwhelming.

We know that great presentation is vital in successfully selling your home, and quickly! So, with only weeks away from putting your house on the market, it's time to get moving.

Creating clean and tidy spaces applies even more to smaller areas such as entranceways, where organising and decluttering can make a huge impact.

Remember, you're depending on an amazing first impression.

### Front Entry and Veranda

- Declutter and find a place for everything – for example, use a basket or rack for shoes
- Thoroughly wash walls and tiles. If necessary, use a beautiful mat to cover any flaws
- Add some flowering plants or potted greenery at the front door
- Add a new door mat outside, along with something quirky like a statue or a piece of art
- Front halls set the first impression. Yours should offer an obvious spot for setting down purses, umbrellas, totes and coats
- What is the view from the front door? Remove extraneous furniture so the sightline is as long as possible
- Remove hooks and hanging things from halls if this makes the hall feel too narrow

### Revisit the Exterior

Time is ticking away and you won't be able to do it all last minute, so take another look at your garage, workshops, garden, paths, windows and outdoor areas. Keep on top of these all the way to your last inspection.

## 1 week out

### Ready for the first inspection – 1-week checklist

With only one week to go before you open the doors to potential buyers, now is the time to pay attention to small tasks like polishing mirrors and dusting bookcases, as well as larger jobs like washing windows and scrubbing tiles. Keeping on top of the cleaning chores will make your home look its best, and, once a buyer is found, it will be easy to have the house ready for that final walk-through. With this checklist, you should feel confident that you have given your home the best possible chance of a quick and successful sale.

- Shop for any last-minute pieces you need for styling. For example, add a large mirror to small rooms to create an illusion of light and space
- Give the house a good airing before inspection days. Regular ventilation will minimise odours
- Encourage family members to keep the house clean and tidy, leading up to and throughout the sales campaign
- Give every room in the house a thorough cleaning after removing all the clutter. Floors, benchtops, bathrooms and kitchens should be kept clean every day so that a quick wipe-over is all that is needed for inspections
- Don't forget to keep the lawns, pool, and outdoor furniture neat and tidy
- Ensure there is an empty drawer in every room for last minute Open for Inspection tidy-ups
- Prepare a list of your property's special features for the Real Estate Agent to refer to on Inspection Day. Address questions that buyers might ask and list instructions on how to use specialised equipment e.g. smart systems

## Last Day

### The Open for Inspection Day – final checklist

Inspections are like a first date; you only get one chance to make that great first impression. Now the big clean is out of the way, you should only need a quick refresh to prepare for that all-important inspection date.

So, set your property up for inspection success with this final checklist...and goodluck!

- Quickly sweep up leaves from paths and driveways, wipe over outdoor furniture and style
- Walk through every room and quickly pick up any items and place them in your room's spare drawer or basket
- Burn incense a few hours before inspection, to clear odours.
- Quickly vacuum floors if needed. Lightly spray and dry mop over tiles and floor boards to freshen if necessary
- Clean toilets with a toilet cleaner, wipe down and place lids down for inspections
- Quickly wipe over bathroom bench, shower screen and mirrors
- Accessorise bathrooms with your open for inspection towels, place a lit candle in a safe location (safe from children, fire and spillage)
- Wipe over kitchen bench, shine the sink and taps, wipe fingerprints off the oven and fridge, and remove all rubbish
- Place a vase of fresh flowers in the dining or living room (if possible)
- Turn on soft ambient music
- Media rooms – turn on the TV and play a children's DVD (G or PG rated)
- Make sure pet areas are odour free
- Hide:
  - Pet beds (place in the boot of your car)
  - Dirty washing (put into the washing machine)
  - Ironing pile (place in a basket and cover with an attractive towel)
  - Pets (take them with you or have family or friends pick them up for every inspection)
- During extreme weather, ensure the house is invitingly warm in winter by lighting any gas or combustion fires, so long as they are safe for children. If it's hot weather in summer, turn the air-conditioning on.
- In all other cases, open windows and blinds to let in sunlight and fresh air. NB. If you need to disguise something outside that is unattractive, strategically align blinds or curtains on that particular window
- If it's raining, leave extra mats at the front and rear doors for visitors to wipe their feet
- Turn all lights on as you do your final room check and leave the house for the Agent to arrive
- Make sure there is ample parking directly outside your property – park any cars you own further up the street.