

A guide to maintaining your  
**New Building Project**



**Master  
Builders**<sup>®</sup>

ASSOCIATION



## Dear Home Owner

Congratulations on taking possession of your new home or renovation/extension. Having chosen a Master Builder to bring your building project to completion, you are now at the point where much of the responsibility for keeping your home in the best possible shape will rest with you. This Kit is designed to assist you in this task.





## SECTION 1:

# The Building Process and its Product

Homes, like cars, need to be maintained. Cars will fail sooner and will deteriorate more quickly if you as the owner do the wrong thing. Car manufacturers have a significant advantage in keeping consumers informed about how to maintain their vehicles. They are engineered and assembled in a factory. Building projects on the other hand are almost always unique in one respect or another and are assembled on site.

This Master Builders' Handover Kit is general in its comments. Because circumstances vary, ie the materials used and the location of the building project as well as climatic variations from one building project to the next, you will also require specific advice to take into account your own unique circumstances.

The Master Builders Association strongly recommends that you read the contents of this handbook and use it as a resource in developing and implementing your own maintenance plan.

## SECTION 2:

# Document Check List

You should keep all the documentation relevant to your building project in one place. This handbook has been designed to enable you to do this. We recommend that you include at least the following important documents -

Your signed copy of the building contract; including all drawings and other documents forming part of the agreement and signed by both parties.

All required permits (in particular the Building Permit and, where it was required, also the Planning Permit) including all stamped drawings and other documents and also all amendments made to these (if any).

Records of all changes to any of the plans and specifications that had formed part of the permit and/or contract.

Contact list of key trades.

Warranties and certificates, such as –

- Warranty insurance policy
- Certificate of Occupancy or of Final Inspection (as the case may be)
- Termite treatment
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Glazing
- Heating/hot water and appliances
- The "Guide to Home Owners on Foundation & Footing" published by the CSIRO
- The "Guide to Standards and Tolerances" published by the Building Commission
- Inspection Check List



### SECTION 3:

## Final Inspection

Either immediately before handover, or at the same time, your builder should have advised you of your opportunity/ obligation to hold a joint inspection with the builder and prepare a list of all matters you believe to require attention in order to achieve completion. This may include items which you believe to be defective.

To assist you and your builder in the preparation of this list, an Inspection Check List form is included in this Handover Kit. You - or your representative - and the builder should complete this form on a room by room basis.

The Building Commission (which is a State Government agency) has developed a useful guide for the industry and its clients in regard to acceptable standards of building called Guide to Standards and Tolerances. You may check on any updates on the Building Commission's website - <http://www.buildingcommission.com.au>.

When you and your builder have finished compiling your list of items, both parties need to sign the document. The builder is then obliged to carry out and complete works on these agreed items. The completion of these works may be dependent upon the availability of the relevant materials, products or finishes. The builder will advise you of the time when he/she expects these materials to become available.

This inspection and notification is your opportunity to raise these issues prior to completion.

On completion of work on the agreed items on the list, the builder is immediately entitled to full payment of the amount shown on the final claim. All further issues are to be dealt with under the warranty processes.

The builder's warranties in the contract oblige him or her to rectify all defective materials and all defective workmanship provided by him or her under the contract, as well as all damage that may have been caused by such defective materials or workmanship, at no cost to the owner.

It is important to be aware that the builder's post-completion warranties do not apply in some circumstances, including the following:

- where the alleged defect is within permissible tolerances, as it does not constitute a defect;
- where the alleged defect is, in fact, normal wear and tear;
- where the alleged defect consists of defective materials or workmanship supplied and/or installed by others;
- where some defect or damage is not due to defective materials or workmanship supplied by the builder under the contract but to some other cause, such as:
  - acts and omissions of the owner, the occupier and of all persons other than the builder (and the builder's employees, suppliers or subcontractors);
  - events outside or beyond the builder's control or responsibility (such as fire, flood, earthquake, impact by objects etc);
  - work carried out during the warranty period by persons other than the builder (and the builder's employees, suppliers or subcontractors).

**Please note that the builder's warranty will be voided altogether in respect of all work and all materials, finishes, components, systems, equipment etc. affected by any work carried out by trades - or other persons not under the builder's control.**





## SECTION 4:

# Dispute Resolution

The quickest, simplest and most cost effective way to resolve quality issues is through discussing the matter with your builder and agreeing on an outcome which is satisfactory to both parties.

We suggest that the steps should be as follows:

Agree issues –

- Agree the matters that need attention.
- Agree mutually satisfactory outcomes.
- Agree time frame for achieving the outcomes.

You may contact Consumer Affairs Victoria if you feel the need for external assistance. Consumer Affairs can be contacted on 1300 558 181.

**Should you feel the conduct of the builder warrants investigation by the Master Builders Association, please send a letter of complaint addressed to The Legal Manager, Master Builders Association of Victoria, GPO Box 5442D, East Melbourne Vic 3002.**

## SECTION 5:

# Home Owner's Duties, Obligations and Responsibilities

## Defects liability

Some building contracts nominate a defects liability period. This is intended to ensure that any defective work observed and reported during the early days following the occupation of the building can be rectified with due speed.

Damage incurred after handover will not be repaired by the builder unless it was caused by –

- some pre-existing defect in the materials or workmanship provided by the builder as part of the contract work; or
- some act or omission by the builder after handover.

## Product warranties in this Kit

This Kit should include warranty certificates for all equipment purchased and/or installed in your home by the builder under his or her contract with you. If you have purchased any equipment from, or had any equipment installed by some other persons, you should also keep their receipts and warranties here.

It can be frustrating for all parties when consumers ring for service without a full understanding of the service available. Sometimes your builder is not necessarily the most appropriate first port of call. For example, queries on the operation of your new oven are best answered by the supplier.

## Ongoing maintenance

Your home, as your car, needs to be maintained on a regular basis. Without basic care your home can deteriorate, causing serious damage, which could be costly to fix. Your warranties may not cover all repairs, especially if the damage is caused by failure to provide proper maintenance.

The law requires that certain types of work are only carried out by appropriately qualified and licensed trade persons. These include all electrical work, all gas, plumbing, refrigeration and roofing work and all termite treatment work. This is not a full list of such work.

You must also consider the safety of all persons living in or entering your home, including all those carrying out repair or maintenance work. Please check the various appliances installed or otherwise used in your new home and compile a list of regular maintenance you need to carry out, including the frequency of activities.





## SECTION 6:

# Some Common Maintenance Issues

**Stormwater drainage:** The gutters, downpipes and drains collect and remove water from the roof and from the paved surfaces of your home. They need to be inspected to ensure they are working correctly. The system needs to fall away from your home. The systems of water removal may include drainage pits, silt or oil traps and other items.

You must always ensure that water cannot pool under, nearby or against your home or it will cause movement, distortion and other damage to structural elements.

You must ensure that any hard surfaces – such as paving, pathways etc - which you may install in the vicinity of any walls, are designed and constructed with careful attention to avoiding potential drainage and water penetration problems. You must also avoid overwatering the ground near any walls.

**Electrical:** Your electrical installation includes safety switches to protect users and the public. When you lose power you need to turn off all appliances before you reset the switch on your switchboard. The causes of outages are often faulty or defective appliances on the power circuit. These appliances need to be checked by a licensed electrician or, where practicable, returned to the place of purchase.

All your smoke alarm backup batteries also need to be checked on a regular basis and replaced whenever they are ineffective.

**Floor coverings:** The proper protection of some floor coverings, such as timber, vinyl and cork, requires them to be sealed, in addition to regular cleaning.

Direct sunlight, even through glass, can also damage some floors and floor finishes, so make sure you read manufacturers' guides and provide the required protection to the floor by curtains, blinds or by some other appropriate means.

**Grey water:** Make sure you read the systems manual for grey water systems so that you understand operating and servicing requirements.

**Rainwater toilet systems:** Rainwater toilet systems depend on water collected from your roof and its drainage system. You need to understand the operation of this system, especially during low rain fall periods. Please read your rainwater toilet system manual carefully.

**Heating and cooling:** Systems need regular servicing by licensed tradespersons to make sure they work effectively and efficiently. Servicing usually includes cleaning of filters, refrigerant gas and cleansing of water cooled units.

**Hot water and solar systems:** These also require regular periodic servicing to make sure they are working properly. Manufacturers' recommendations need to be understood for frost protection of solar panels and sacrificial anodes in the water storage.

**Painting:** Paints used on external surfaces will deteriorate with time and will need attention in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations. How long your paint lasts is dependent on many factors, including the colour selected, as well as the exposure of the particular painted surface to weather and to other environmental influences.

The maintenance of painted surfaces in a good condition is essential to the protection of the underlying materials. For example, well-maintained paintwork on timber external walls will reduce the likelihood of rot occurring in the timber.

Internal paints tend to last for a lot longer, but exactly how long is also dependent on the surroundings created by the lifestyle of occupants. Among other factors, any excessive moisture, smoke, direct sunlight and the use of certain cleaning agents will reduce the lifespan of a painted surface.

**Swimming pools, fences and gates:** The servicing needs of pools are dependent on the system selected, the usage, weather conditions and the time of year. Generally speaking summer (warmer months) requires higher levels of maintenance to prevent algae growth.

You need to be always mindful of the hazard that swimming pools represent to the security and safety of people, and especially of all children. You have express legal obligations concerning the control of access, by prescribed types of fences and gates. Your obligations include ensuring that those fences and gates are working properly at all times.

**Termites:** Your home may be or become subject to termite infestation. We strongly recommend regular inspections by experts to ensure that any occurrence or recurrence of termites is noticed early and is dealt with promptly, so that any damage to your home is minimised or avoided. Tell tale signs of termite infestation include the appearance of numerous round holes, 2-3mm diameter, with abundant, loose and gritty frass (borer dust), which feels like fine table salt.

There are many approved termite protection systems, including barrier protection, chemical sprays and cap systems for stumps. If one or more of these have already been provided for your home, you need to read the specialist advice provided by the provider/s of your termite protection system/s.

Do not store any wood or paper-based products adjacent to walls or under the floor of your home. These can attract as well as conceal termites.

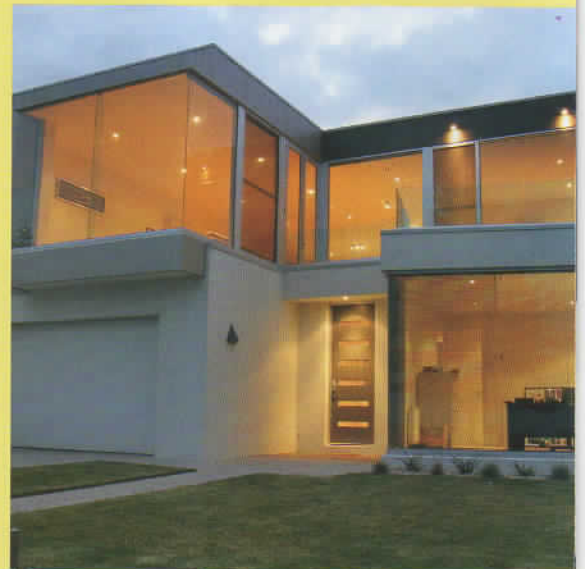
**Trees and gardens:** Your landscaping and gardens can affect your home if drainage issues are left unresolved. Before making any changes to your external areas, you should discuss the drainage implications with a qualified civil engineer, landscape architect, landscape gardener or plumber. Damage to your home can be minimised and unnecessary repairs avoided by taking their advice.

Trees and some other plants are also common causes of damage. First, by absorbing water, they change the moisture content of the surrounding soil. If a tree or shrub is too close to a building, its spreading roots will affect the soil supporting the building and damage the foundations. Secondly, such adjacent roots can also affect the moisture content of porous building materials such as concrete and brick.

Automatic watering systems need to be checked regularly to ensure no leakage from the sprays or drippers and that water is directed to the garden or lawn areas. Sprinklers that spray on your home need to be redirected to ensure your home is not subject to water entry through weep holes, window sills, doors or other points of entry.

This Kit includes a copy of the CSIRO "Guide to Home Owners on Foundation & Footing". This document provides assistance to homeowners on identifying causes of movement in a building. It will provide you with information on different types of soil and it illustrates the damage that buildings can suffer when foundation soils are affected by changes in moisture content. It also gives advice on how to avoid these problems.

Water (potable supply) should always be used sensibly and only after checking with your local authority for restrictions on its usage.





SECTION 7:

# A Place to Sign

Customer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Job No: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Municipality: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM CHECK** (please tick) ✓

**Section 1**

- Pre-Handover Checklist
- Handover letter

**Section 2**

- Certificate of warranty insurance
- Certificate of occupancy/completion
- Certificate for termite treatment
- Certificates for all plumbing and various trades
- Certificate of electrical safety
- Glazing certificate
- Heating, hot water and appliances
- Timber floor management guidelines
- Homeowner's termite manual
- CSIRO 'Guide to Home Owners on Foundation & Footing'
- Warranty cards for supplied items
- Other notes from suppliers and subcontractors
- Colour selections

**Section 3**

- Information for home owners

**Section 4** (place to sign with duplicate)

Owner 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Owner 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Builder \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 (or builder's representative)

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