



REJUVENTATE YOUR RENTAL THIS SPRING

A professional wash will
make your rental look
fresh again

As the longer, sunnier and warmer days kick in, it's time for that overdue rental upkeep – get it done now and there will be fewer headaches over summer for you and your tenant.

By **Carolyn Brooke**

TOO OFTEN GOOD tenants move out because of small, fixable problems. Spending money on small improvements and maintenance like replacing tatty curtains, cracked benchtops or security lights is always better than the cost of lost rent because a fed-up tenant moves out.

Tenants appreciate having their concerns and complaints taken seriously and are more likely to stay longer and treat a place better if they feel happy there. Whether the task is big or small, a much needed repair or a nice-to-have upgrade, there are many ways to improve your rental.

ROOM REFRESHERS

Hanging new thermal-backed curtains is one of easiest and most effective improvements, especially if the existing ones are old and thin. New curtains look smart and help keep heat in. It's best to stick to neutral colours to suit a range of decor and for wide appeal. Look out for sales at stores like Harvey Furnishings and Curtain Studio as you can buy quality sets for reasonable prices.

If the carpet in your rental is old, shabby or smelly, then it's probably time to replace it. You don't want high-end, expensive carpet but you do want something decent – a fairly heavy duty carpet that looks

okay and will last. Consider the thickness of carpet samples against the price and understand the qualities of the different fibres (for instance, solution-dyed versus wool) that you're buying. Always opt for a thick underlay to help keep warmth in. If the existing underlay is not too bad, then you could leave it to save costs. Ask about guarantees and warranties on both the carpet and installation. It's generally best to avoid long-pile carpet as it absorbs more dirt, smell and dust; and darker colours will likely mark less than lighter shades. Note that thick underlay helps to add a feel of lushness to short-pile carpet.

If you are between tenancies and internal paintwork looks bad, it's an opportunity to repaint. It's a relatively easy way to achieve an immediate visual impact. Tidy presentation also gives prospective tenants an impression of how you expect the house to be kept. Always prep thoroughly as you don't want to be repeating the job sooner than you have to because of a shoddy finish. Pay a painter to do the work rather than a doing a DIY paint job if you're time poor. Professionals usually get the job done quicker than you would, therefore less lost rent as the place can be tenanted quicker. It's always important to use a quality brand like Resene and always use the correct type of paint for the job. Talk to your paint supplier in the first instance. Stick to neutral colours or whites for wide appeal and for easy repairs or touch ups.

BETTER BATHROOMS AND KITCHENS

Sometimes no amount of scrubbing works on tired, dirty-looking or stained tiles and showers so a professional bathroom restoration can be helpful. A professional tile clean is a lot cheaper than replacing tiles and gives a bright and clean look, to not only attract new tenants but to impress the existing ones. Seal can also be applied to tiles for stain proofing, which will help tenants keep them clean going forward. An anti-slip agent can also be applied if needed. Professional shower glass restoration can also bring a dirty looking



New flooring can be
affordable and effective



Avoid deciduous plants as you don't want extra falling leaves



WATERBLASTING CONCRETE AREAS, DECKS AND FENCES MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE

shower back to life.

For a bench-top makeover in the kitchen, pre-made bench tops can be purchased from hardware stores for DIY installation. Otherwise there are companies who specialise in this type of work. A quality benchtop gives a kitchen a whole new look and costs a fraction of a new kitchen.

Splashbacks in kitchens and bathrooms are another idea and are both visually impressive and practical, protecting walls from water and food splatter. Pre-made and custom-made splashbacks are available in coloured or patterned glass and tiles are also an option.

If the existing kitchen or laundry floor is in bad shape, then it could be replaced with laminate, bamboo or cork flooring. There are many types of laminate flooring available. Bamboo is hardwearing, durable, reduces noise, looks great, is harder than oak floors and is fast and easy to install. Boards lock together and can be assembled easily with no glue or nails. As a sustainable option (bamboo is harvested quickly), bamboo flooring can also be a renting or selling feature. Wax is used to seal it and to prevent moisture damage, also keeping it easy to clean. Cork tiles are another option and are easy to install, hard wearing and absorb noise.

OUTDOOR IMPROVEMENTS

Are tenants complaining about broken lights or poor lighting? Installing sensor lights outside near paths, entrances or driveways will give tenants a better sense of security and safety – it's important to feel safe and secure in your home. Alarms are

another way of providing tenants peace of mind and can also give your property an edge on other rental properties.

Tidy gardens give the impression of low maintenance to prospective tenants. Pruning trees, mowing lawns, weeding and throwing out garden junk coupled with waterblasting concrete areas, decks and fences makes a huge difference.

While ongoing garden and lawn maintenance comes down to the Tenancy Agreement, it's fair to say that generally you can't expect too much from tenants when it comes to gardening. It's always best to keep gardens as low maintenance as possible. With new plantings use a small variety of plants with year-round foliage. A mix of colours will look nice but avoid deciduous plants as you don't want extra falling leaves. Weed matting also helps to reduce weeds and watering requirements.

If you have vacating tenants then it's a great time to get into the gardens before they move out to prepare for the next tenancy. Keep in mind that despite what's in the Tenancy Agreement, it's not a bad idea to give tenants a hand in the gardens if you're able to.

There are many options available for cleaning, staining, painting and resealing concrete and pavers. Sprucing up concrete or pavers can make a huge difference to an outside area, especially effective if it's really stained or dirty.

Remember to check overflow pipes, downpipes and spouting for leaks and to ensure they are draining correctly with no blockages. Downpipes should be connected to storm water mains or soak pits. If drips from pipes are pooling, there will be unnecessary moisture near the dwelling. Drips on paths can cause moss to grow and create slippery surfaces – not a good look and it's a safety issue.

YOUR BEST TOOL: A PLAN

Upkeep goes hand in hand with being a landlord. Remember, the best maintenance tool is having a plan. Always keep an eye out during property inspections for pending jobs and ask tenants for their thoughts also. Obviously you don't want a wish list but focus on small improvements that will make a big difference; insulation and security generally factor quite high.

Be smart about where you spend your money and time. Useful improvements are generally better than aesthetic improvements and always pay attention to safety issues. ■