

BUILDING CHECK TIPS

FROM VICTORIAN HOUSE INSPECTIONS



Buying a home can be one of the biggest purchases you will ever make and that is why Victorian House Inspections have put together an easy to read checklist when inspecting your potential new property

A quick guide to know what to look out for when inspecting your new home.

Every house will have issues as no home is perfect, if you are expecting your new home to be issue free you will probably never purchase a home.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

ROOF

Before entering the property i recommend taking a moment to assess the roof, tree overhangs and tree location in relation to home. Check the roof line for sagging and make sure downpipes are connected.



FENCES & DRIVEWAYS

Assess fences and driveways for cracks, sinking movement and the like. Front brick fences should be physically pushed as it is common for brick fence and disengaged piers on fences and carports to become loose and create a safety concern.



METER BOARD

Prior to entering the property always check the meter board as this normally displays important information like durable termite notices, age of property and if a safety switch has been installed.



WEEP HOLES

If the property is on a concrete slab make sure weep holes are clear of debris and damp course which is the mortar course below weep holes has not been compromised by soil or paths. If on a subfloor make sure vents have not been covered and damp course is exposed check eave sheet linings have not come away from fascias.



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

FASCIA DECAY

Timber fascias are prone to decay and in particular the ends where moisture gravitates through mitres and nail penetrations. Check gutters and downpipes for rust.

CRACKS IN BRICK WALLS

Cracks in brick walls are very common and in certain construction types can be the result of foundation sinking, poor drainage or expansion. It is very important to identify the differences in crack sizes and in particular direction of cracking.

Most brick veneer homes prior to the Nineties were not fitted with articulation joints to allow for expansion and contraction and subsequently step cracking in mortar perpendis up to 4mm occurs which is common and to be expected.

If crack sizes exceed 4mm this can be caused by foundation movement ie moisture expanding soil causing heaving or in drier months soil contracts without the presence moisture.

If still unsure I recommend consulting with a building inspector to identify if cracks are serious and require further investigation.

WEATHERBOARDS

Weatherboards should be checked for decay particularly on the ends where moisture enters via the nail penetrations and around the openings of doors and windows.



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

✓ **CONDITION OF WINDOWS**

I recommend pushing your finger into any areas of timber windows that look suspect. Soft timber is an indication of water ingress and repair or replacing of window frames may be required.

✓ **GAPS BETWEEN WINDOWS & WALLS**

First signs of movement in a brick veneer home occur between windows and walls, because the windows are fitted to the timber frame of the house and the brick walls are a facade. Always check for gaps between walls and windows, if gaps exceed 8mm I recommend contacting a building inspector for further advice as this generally constitutes movement in foundations.

✓ **ASBESTOS**

Asbestos is a common material used for eaves linings in homes built between 1940 up until 1982 when asbestos was made illegal in building materials, look for damaged eaves linings. Asbestos is not a concern if it is intact but can be a health hazard if its cut into dust particles and those airborne particles are inhaled.

It is important to identify which materials are asbestos if future renovations are planned.



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

INTERIOR INSPECTION

When inspecting the interior of the property it is crucial to take your time and look over all walls, floors and ceilings for any cracks in plaster, visible nail heads, fresh painting and moisture stains.

-  Check all architrave and skirting joints to see if separation has occurred.
-  Always open windows as binding windows may be the cause of foundation issues.
-  Always check that doors operate soundly and that the gaps between doors and door jamb are even and at 90 degrees first signs of foundation movement will occur around doors and windows as they need to be installed level to function correctly.

DIAGONAL PLASTER CRACKS

Cracks in plaster walls and ceilings are common and most hairline cracks are not a concern if they appear in plaster joints, however if cracks develop diagonally in plaster this normally equates to movement or sinking and i recommend contacting an inspector for advice.

SLOPING FLOORS

Check that there are no gaps between skirtings and floorboards. Floors should not slope and any deviation or undulation in floors should be investigated and the cause identified ie are timber stumps decaying and need replacing?



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

✔ KITCHENS AND LAUNDRY

Check that hotplates and range hoods function, look for moisture stains behind sink and gaps between bench tops and splashbacks.

Check below troughs for pre-existing moisture damage. Gaps between benches and splashbacks can indicate movement.

✔ WET AREAS

I recommend running all taps during your inspection.

Make sure water drains and after running water make a note to come back and reinspect the shower base at the end of your inspection to see if water has fully drained (very important particularly in shower recesses)

Where possible check wall linings on all sides of shower recesses for damp plaster and signs of leaks which can often be concealed inside wardrobes.

Slow drains can mean big repair dollars. Identify any dummy tiles in floors and walls & check that grout between tiles has not discoloured or dislodged.

Drummy tiles will inevitably require replacing and can have caused damage to floor structure below in or to walls behind tiles.

✔ APPLIANCES & HEATERS

I recommend that you enquire with the agent or vendor as to whether all appliances are functioning ie heaters, air conditioners etc as these can be expensive items to repair if not in a serviceable condition.



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

BALCONIES

Balconies leak it,s a fact and make up one the largest case files at VCAT hearings. Be sure to look at all areas of balconies including the underside for leaks.

Look for calcification in grout joints if it's a tiled balcony as this is the first signs of water ingress.

Make sure all balustrades and fittings are secure as these areas generally penetrate water proofing and in most cases are the cause of leaking balconies.



LOOK UNDER THE PROPERTY

If possible take a look under the property (if on a subfloor) and determine if stumps are concrete or timber.

Timber stumps will generally decay after 60 years so replacing may be required if the home is old and has original timber stumps as the sole plate used to support the stumps rots away as it is in contact with soil and moisture.

Have floors been re-stumped but not re-leveled?

TERMITES

Termites eat timber and can destroy the structure in a very short period of time

Look for waves in paint on architraves door jambs exposed flooring and skirtings as the termites will eat the timber but rarely expose themselves.

Unfortunately termites are very hard to find and i recommend having a professional inspect your property to give you peace of mind if you have timber pest concerns.



Buying a home is one of the biggest investments if not the biggest investment most people will ever make.

That is why we recommend taking your time and assessing all aspects of the property.

When inspecting a home it is important to have a routine in place to reduce the chance of missing something.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can offer any free advice or help with the purchase of your property

Happy house hunting!

If you have any questions or concerns in relation to the purchase of your new property please contact me:

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