

Home Maintenance:

Essential Guide for Every Homeowner



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Abstract

Home maintenance in Sydney involves regular tasks to keep your property in top condition. This includes seasonal cleaning, plumbing checks, roof inspections, and garden upkeep. Proper maintenance helps prevent costly repairs, ensures safety, and enhances the longevity and value of your home in Sydney's diverse climate.

1. Introduction

Welcome to "Home Maintenance: Essential Guide for Every Homeowner." This guide offers practical tips and expert advice to help you keep your home in top condition. From seasonal tasks to routine inspections, learn how to prevent costly repairs, ensure safety, and maintain the value and comfort of your home in Sydney.

2. Why You Need To Adjust Your Monthly Budget For Home Maintenance

As a homeowner in Sydney, you likely save for certain costs every year—property taxes, insurance, utilities and DIY projects—and keep a stash of cash hidden for emergencies. But unlike renting, owning a home also means you're responsible for literally anything that goes wrong, so you can't afford to ignore continual home maintenance costs, either. Here's how to tweak your budget accordingly and prevent unexpected expenses from derailing your financial health.

"Buying a home is a big investment in Sydney," says Des Moines-based realtor Sara Hopkins. "It's easy to focus on the cost of the home purchase and forget about what needs to be saved for routine home maintenance. I always recommend you put aside around 2% of your home's purchase every year in a savings account to deal with routine maintenance issues."

However, there's a big difference between big-ticket items often covered under a home warranty, like a furnace or water heater or new roof, and routine home repairs and maintenance. "If you've purchased a new home, structural, system, appliance and even landscaping warranties may be in place," explains Sharon Lang, a real estate agent in Northern Virginia. "Start off budgeting 5-10% of your net pay towards a home maintenance fund. While it may seem like you shouldn't have to, there are things that you will need to buy—installation of garage door openers, garden hoses, downspout extenders, door mats, furnace filters, refrigerator water filters, light bulbs, extension cords, batteries, cleaning equipment and supplies."

Other items on the list, per Hopkins: having your HVAC inspected and cleaned, fixing plumbing leaks, pruning trees, pest treatments, repainting siding to keep moisture, and so on. Of course, you can't budget a specific amount for every single conceivable problem, says Sydney City-based real estate analyst Julie Gurner, but it's still wise to set aside a couple thousand dollars in a specific savings account to cover whatever does come up.

"A good view of annual maintenance and repair budgets for your house is between 1-4% of the purchase price of your house," says John Bodrozic, cofounder of HomeZada. "If your house is less than five years old, then 1% is the appropriate range. If your house is 25 years or older, then 4% is a good number. Homes between 5 and 25 years old might vary between the 1-4% budget."



Why the range? As homes get older, notes Bodrozcic, more repair costs tend to consume a bigger portion of your overall maintenance costs. Newer homes, in contrast, required less annual maintenance because the materials are obviously newer, and many elements of the house may still be under warranty. And if you want to get super specific, real estate investor Eric Bowlin recommends building a spreadsheet of all the items in your house that outlines the item, lifespan and total cost—then use that number to calculate how much you’d need to save per year or month for potential repairs or replacement.

According to financial educator of Sydney and coach Roslyn Lash, monthly saving is the way to go. GoBankingRates.com estimates that the average monthly cost for maintenance is around \$1,200, even though it does vary based on the size and location of the house. Lash echoes Bowlin’s approach, and encourages home owners to use their inspection report as an overview of upcoming repairs in order to develop or adjust your budget. For example, if your home needs a \$5,000 roof in three years, says Lash, you’d want to say \$139 per month ($\$5,000$ divided by 36 months) toward it. Also, Bowlin suggests tracking such expenses over the years, which allows you to look back and see what annual maintenance costs have been. At the bare minimum, set aside enough money to cover a couple major repairs per year.

“Plan for the unexpected,” says Hopkins. “In Iowa, we often have to have tree roots removed from sewer lines—that’s \$150-\$300, plus the cost of cleaning your basement when it backs up. Or if your dishwasher leaks, or your washing machine overflows. Having a home costs money, but the long term investment is far worth it in the end.”

3. Home Maintenance Projects That Are a Waste of Time

Wish you had more free time to do the things you wanted? You're about to get it! This expert-approved home advice will change your life in Sydney.

Getting carpets professionally cleaned

Think you need to enlist a professional carpet cleaner once or even twice a year? Think again. Unless your carpet suffers from a multitude of food or wine spills and heavy pet usage, you don't need to do a deep cleaning more than once every 18 months, according to the Carpet and Rug Institute. In between, simply focus on deodorizing and spot treatments. "Carpets can be deodorized with baking soda every other month, and rubbing in a little bit of powdered Tide or Dawn dish soap with warm water is an inexpensive, easy way to treat spills and spots," says Ty Rosa, owner of the Sparkling Clean Home.

Repainting walls

What else can you skip this year? The expensive and exhausting process of repainting your walls. You might be tempted to do this to make them look new again, but all you really need to do is clean them properly. Believe it or not, that means vacuuming and washing them, says Rosa. Since they hold a lot of dust, she advises vacuuming them every three months, then following up with a little high-quality, all-natural dish soap, warm water, and a microfiber cloth. This will bring your walls back to life and keep them in tip-top shape.

Washing curtains

Some people in Sydney religiously wash their curtains every month, but this is another time-consuming home project that isn't necessary, according to home cleaning expert Natalie Barrett of Nifty Cleaning Services. But this doesn't mean you can ignore your curtains altogether. After all, curtains do accumulate a lot of dust and grime. "Take a less demanding approach to keeping them tidy by dusting the curtains and regularly deodorizing them for a fresh and clean scent," she recommends. Incorporate these mini cleaning tasks in your regular chores, and then opt for professional curtain cleaning every six months or so to ensure that all dirt beneath the surface is eliminated.

Cleaning windows

You'll want to hug Barrett for this tip: Skip the window cleaning...at least in the summertime. Why? On hot days, before you're able to wipe away the cleaning detergent and all the dust and dirt, the heat will dry up the mixture. This will result in Sisyphean work for you: more effort and only more dirt to get rid of! Instead, spot-treat kiddie fingerprints and dog-nose smudges in the summer, and leave the intense, full window cleaning for the fall.

Polishing wood floors

Carpenter Trond Nyland, founder and CEO of the Cordless Drill Guide, urges you to stop polishing your wood floors on a regular basis. If you do this too frequently, you'll actually damage the wood. Instead, use cleaning chemicals a lot more sparingly. Furniture should be polished only every six weeks or so to help keep the veneer, and when it comes to hardwood floors, Nyland advises running a vacuum over them about once a week and giving them a wax and polish every three years.



Mulching

A lot of work goes into maintaining the outside of your house, but this is one thing you can eliminate from this year's to-do list. While mulching flower beds in the front yard can certainly make them look nice, the effect may not be worth the effort. That's the assessment of Joe from the blog Mini Riches, who's worked in the construction business for a decade. The process can take up days of your precious time or cost you thousands of dollars if you hire a professional. Skipping this for one season won't dramatically impact the curb appeal of your house, but it will spare your back and knees and keep a lot more money in your bank account. Instead, tidy up the beds with a rake, and pull out weeds as you see them rearing their ugly heads.

Cleaning dryer vents

Step away from the dryer vent. This is not a project that you want to DIY, says Jason Kapica, president of Dryer Vent Wizard. Instead, pay attention to the warning signs that you might have a problem, such as your dryer being hot to the touch or needing additional cycles to run, and then call in a professional for the actual vent cleaning. It's not that cleaning a dryer vent is a waste of time—it's a waste of time for you to do it because you're not a professional. Tinkering with it yourself can damage your dryer, and if you attempt to clean or repair it yourself, you might miss important fire-hazard signs.

Power washing

While many homeowners love the way power washers deep-clean, in most cases, this kind of treatment should be limited. "One downside of excessive power washing is the abrasiveness of the water pressure itself, which can remove paint and wood fibers if used to excess," says Richard Reina, product training director at TOOLSiD.com. "Just because a wood fence is a little dirty, it shouldn't

require the power washer every time.” Instead, use a garden hose with standard water pressure to minimize damage to siding and fences.

Sharpening lawn mower blades

“Whether you have a push mower or a ride-on mower, you have heard that the mower blade needs to be kept sharp,” says Reina. But the truth is, you don’t need to do this task as often as professionals recommend. “If you’re sharpening that blade every few weeks, you’re wasting your time because a well-sharpened blade should last most of the mowing season (depending on the size of your lawn, of course).” Not only are you losing time that could be spent on hobbies or relaxing, but the frequent sharpening will also ultimately cost you money. Think of it this way: Each time you sharpen that blade, you remove a fine layer of material, so if you’re doing it too frequently, the blade will need to be replaced sooner.

Cleaning your entire house

This might be controversial for neat-freaks, but you don’t need to clean your entire home before entertaining guests. If you’re short on time, says Richard Kennedy of the Vacuum Experts, “just vacuum the places that people actually go.” For example, you might just want to quickly vacuum from the front door to the stairs and in the sitting area. The well-rated Dyson Cyclone V10 Cordless Stick Vacuum get the job done quickly and efficiently. You’ll also want to scoop up any clutter and temporarily stash that in a locked bedroom, fold throw blankets nicely, and put away stray shoes. This work takes minutes instead of hours, but to guests, the house looks spotless.

4. The Ultimate Home Maintenance Checklist Monthly and by Season

Regular home maintenance is taking proactive and preventative measures to keep your home in good working order and not being neglectful or waiting for something to go awry. Overflowing gutters, a balky furnace, or a chimney that refuses to draw do not have to be a problem if you keep up with these parts of the house. Prevent costly service calls, keep everyone comfortable, and preserve your home value and pocketbook by following a regular home maintenance checklist.

Monthly Home Maintenance

Every month, check the safety devices, ensure the water and air systems are running smoothly, and check for the accumulation of dust or debris that can interfere with the regular operation of the home’s systems.

- Change the HVAC filters, including the furnace filter.
- Press your smoke and carbon monoxide detector buttons to ensure they work. Replace batteries as needed.
- Check sink, shower, and tub drains for clogs and clear them, if necessary.
- For low-use areas such as guest or basement bathrooms, flush the toilet, clean sediment rings from the bowl, and turn on both sink taps.
- If you use a water softener system, check and replenish the salt levels, if necessary.
- Test all of the GFCI outlets to ensure they are working correctly.
- Inspect electrical cords for wear.

- Check all heating and air vents for obstructions and remove dust. Make sure that the dryer vent is appropriately venting to the outside.
- Clean the garbage disposal by grinding ice cubes and sanitizing with vinegar or lemon.



Regular Quarterly Home Maintenance

Every three months, perform these critical maintenance tasks:

- Check the gauges on your fire extinguishers to ensure they are still correctly pressurized.
- Check your water heater's temperature and pressure (T&P) valve to ensure it will expel water. Place a bucket below the relief tube to avoid flooding.
- Ensure your garage door's safety reverse function works and the electric eyes are correctly positioned.
- Remove showerheads and sink aerators and soak them in vinegar to clean out collected sediment.

Winter Home Maintenance Checklist

With cold temperatures and harsh elements pressing in, winter home maintenance focuses on damage control: taking control of damaged items and preventing further damage. Because of inclement weather, you may not have the time and leisure to take on extensive exterior repairs safely.

- From a safely secured ladder, check gutters and the lower roof for ice dams and eliminate them as necessary. Be careful of ice when accessing the roof. Avoid going on the roof in the morning. Wait until the ice has melted, later in the afternoon.

- Check that the covers are on the outside hose bibs (faucets) and have not iced up.
- Make sure that the yard is not pooling up with water. While you probably won't be able to create a full-scale yard drainage system in winter, you will want to ensure that none of that water is near the foundation. If so, grade the soil away from the house to prevent interior flooding.
- Use this indoor-friendly season to clean the basement, garage, and other interior spaces that get neglected during warm, sunny months.
- Keep an eye on your electrical service drop and the line that leads from your home to the power pole (only if you have above-ground electric service). If large branches have fallen or are hanging on the line, call the electric company for removal.

Spring Home Maintenance Checklist

Spring home maintenance is chiefly about cleaning up after the mess and damage of winter. Weather is still spotty, so this isn't the best time to take on long-term outside projects like painting the house—this comes later on.

- Clean the gutters and, using a water hose, ensure they drain.
- Check the exterior siding for damage and repair as needed.
- Check shingles, flashing, and vents for damage when the roof is dry and safe to walk on.
- Clean and replace window screens.
- Trim back trees that may deposit branches on your home. For branches near power lines, call your electric company for pruning.
- In late spring, install window unit air conditioners.
- Reverse ceiling fans so that the vanes rotate in a counter-clockwise direction. This will move air downward, cooling the room.
- Thoroughly clean the windows with a squeegee.
- Clean the house and donate unwanted items or sell them at a yard sale.
- Service the A/C unit in preparation for the summer.

Summer Home Maintenance Checklist

With higher temperatures and low precipitation, summer affords comfortable working conditions to make intensive repairs that were impossible in prior seasons. In many areas, midsummer is the best time to take on projects that might be ruined by poor weather.

- Make repairs to the home's siding and paint the exterior as needed.
- Clean and repair your outside deck.
- Wash and apply a sealant to wood fences with a brush, roller, or paint sprayer.
- Flush out your water heater to empty it of sediment.
- Clean debris from window wells with a broom.
- If you noted any drainage problems from previous seasons, now is the time to consider building a robust drainage system with catch basins in your yard.
- Inspect the roof for loose shingles and flashing.
- Replace windows and exterior doors as needed.
- Have an HVAC company inspect the furnace and make necessary repairs.
- Repair cracks in an asphalt driveway with crack sealer.
- Resurface the asphalt driveway by sweeping on asphalt sealer with a broom.



Fall Home Maintenance Checklist

Home maintenance during the fall season is focused on preparing the house for winter.

- Test the sump pump by pouring water down the sump pit until the pump turns on.
- Remove, clean, and store the window screens.
- If your home has storm windows, install them.
- Remove window unit air conditioners. If you have central air conditioning, winterize it.
- Contact HVAC professionals for annual maintenance on the furnace.
- Call in a chimney cleaning service or clean the chimney by yourself.
- Winterize exterior hose bibs (faucets) by protecting them with foam covers.
- Remove leaves and debris from garden ponds and water features.
- Reverse ceiling fans so that the vanes rotate in a clockwise direction. This will help distribute the warm air that collects near the ceiling.

5. Essential Home Maintenance Tasks Every Homeowner Should Know How to Do

A little effort goes a long way with these home maintenance projects.

Whether you're new to homeownership or you're a seasoned pro looking to sharpen your skills, these home maintenance tasks are worth getting to know. While you might already be familiar with a few of these home improvement projects, whether snaking a drain or changing an air filter, others might be new to you. In fact, you might not even realize some of the items on this list should be maintained (sorry in advance for changing your weekend plans).

Get started today to prevent damage to your home, save thousands of dollars on future home repairs, and skip unnecessary service calls.

Stop a Running Toilet

Over time, a toilet's water line may begin to run continuously, leading to higher water usage. To fix a running toilet, start by determining why the toilet is running. The problem could be due to an overflow tube that's too short, the water level could be set too high, the flush valve chain could be too short, the flapper could be worn or warped, or the flush and fill valves could need replacing.

Reset a Tripped Breaker

To reset a breaker, locate your home's electrical panel and identify the tripped breaker. It will be the breaker with a switch that isn't fully on. To reset the tripped breaker, move the switch fully to the "off" position, then return it to the "on" position.

If the breaker continues to trip without a clear reason, don't restore the power. Instead, contact an electrician to find the problem.

Fix a Leaky Faucet

Drip, drip, drip ... that's the sound of money going down your drain. When simply turning your faucet off a little tighter no longer prevents it from leaking, it's time to learn to fix a leaky faucet. You'll also need to know how to shut off the water for this DIY home repair.

Repair or Replace Window Screens

When mild weather rolls in, give your air conditioning system a well-deserved break. However, doing so before making sure your window screens are up to snuff will result in a house full of uninvited guests. Learn to repair and replace window screens to ensure your home stays pest free.

Patch a Hole in Drywall

If you're transitioning from renting a home to home ownership, you might have already learned how to patch drywall the right way (or, at least good enough to secure your damage deposit). If not, fixing drywall holes from minuscule to monstrous with professional results is easier than you might think.

Find a Wall Stud

Once you move into your first home, you have an endless list of items, from pictures to TVs, to hang on the wall. Whether you're hanging artwork or anchoring furniture to protect pets and kids, one of the first things you need to learn is how to accurately find a wall stud. This simple task can be completed through various methods, whether you opt to use a stud finder or simply tap the wall and measure accordingly.

Clean a Dryer Vent

According to the Sydney Fire Administration, clothes dryers cause about 2,900 house fires each year, and about a third of those result from a failure to clean the dryer. One task in particular that is often forgotten is cleaning the dryer vent. This essential home maintenance task should be completed at least once each year.

Clear the Gutters

Thousands of people are injured annually as a result of ladder falls.¹ Luckily, there are a number of ways to clean your gutters from the safety of the ground, which can prevent thousands of dollars in

water damage. And if you do decide to clean gutters using a ladder, follow these tips to check this outdoor maintenance task off your checklist safely and swiftly.



Clean or Replace a Faucet Aerator

If your faucet is running inconsistently or has a partial flow, the problem likely lies right at the tip of your faucet rather than with your plumbing or water supply. Inside the faucet is something called an aerator, which can become clogged with sediment or lime and calcium buildup over time. Cleaning or replacing your faucet's aerator could be all it takes to get your faucet back up and running.

Change HVAC Filters

Depending on the type of filter, your HVAC filter could need replacing every 30 days. Additionally, if you have pets, that number could reduce to every 20 days. To keep your HVAC system running efficiently all year long, it's worth getting to know how often you should change your HVAC filters. And if your HVAC system utilizes reusable filters, follow these instructions for cleaning an air filter.

Check and Maintain Your HVAC System

Beyond changing your home's air filters, there are several simple ways you can set your family and your heat and air unit up for seasonal success. Take the time to check and maintain your HVAC system before each season to keep it performing its best.

Change a Door Lock

When moving into a new place, parting ways with a roommate or tenant, or making aesthetic updates to your home, you'll likely want to change the door locks. Skip the call to the handyman and learn to do it yourself. This home improvement project typically takes only a day to complete while providing an updated style with increased security.

Replace a Shattered Lightbulb

Sure, everyone knows how to change a lightbulb, but what about a broken bulb? Sometimes, old lightbulbs separate from their bases, while others simply shatter. You can safely remove the threaded portion by turning off the power at the breaker and unscrewing it using needle-nose pliers.

Snake a Drain

Once you own a home, there's no more calling your landlord when the drains clog. Sure, you can call a plumber, but once you learn how easy it is to snake a drain, you'll be shocked at the money you can save by doing the job yourself. A drain snake can reach up to 25 feet and is ideal for clearing soft clogs in sinks, bathtubs, and showers.

Fix a Loose Door Hinge

In well-loved homes, door hinges often become loose, causing doors to sag and stick. Left unchecked, damage can occur to the door, the other hinge points, and the frame. To circumvent any additional issues and remedy the loose hinge, all you need is a small piece of wood like a match stick. Learn to troubleshoot your door hinge problems to set yourself up for success.

Keep Your Home Running Smoothly

Following this quick home maintenance crash course will help mitigate costly repairs and keep your home looking and functioning as it should.

6. Viral Cleaning Tips You Should Definitely Try

Cleaning a home can be monotonous, tiresome and stressful for many people. The majority of working professionals and busy parents don't get enough time to spruce up greasy kitchen appliances, stained carpets and dust-laden surfaces. That's where viral cleaning hacks come into play.

Of course, the internet is busted with tips and tricks on cleaning, but choosing the most effective one is critical. This becomes even more imperative when performing an expert end of lease cleaning Sydney before the final rental inspection.

Some hacks or products may cause harm to the surface. So, be cautious and follow the tried and tested tips for the best outcomes. Here is a list of 10 viral cleaning tips approved by experts as well. You must try these to create a clean, organised, shiny abode while saving time and energy.

Let's Get Started!

1. Dust Ceiling Fan Blades With A Pillowcase

Fan blades of a ceiling fan are the most overlooked spots in any home. But if you are wondering how to clean this hard-to-reach spot without any fancy products, here is a viral hack.

Grab an old pillowcase and wrap it around the fan blade. After that, slide it off to trap accumulated dust and dirt particles. This trick will prevent the dust from falling on the surfaces you have already cleaned, such as floors and carpets. Isn't it time-saving and simple? You can also use everyday items to clean other surfaces of your home like a pro.

Tip: Use a step stool or ladder for easy and safe access to your ceiling fan.



2. De-Grease The BBQ Grill With A Potato

This hack may sound weird, but it can do wonders in maintaining the shine and functionality of your barbecue grills. All you need is a half of potato and coarse salt.

When your grill is warm (not super-hot), sprinkle a generous amount of salt and rub a piece of potato using a fork. Gently scrub to dislodge the burnt food particles and gunk. You should include this hack in your weekly cleaning checklist, especially if you are a busy parent.

Rinse it with hot water and let it dry completely.

3. Use Vinegar And Baking Soda To Unclog Drains

This is one of the most viral cleaning hacks. Mixing baking soda and vinegar produces carbon dioxide gas or fizz that can help remove stuck food particles and grime from clogged kitchen sink drains:

Pour one cup of boiling water down the drain

Pour one cup of baking soda, followed by one cup of white vinegar

Cover it with the drain plug for 10-20 minutes. This will break down stuck gunk and food particles

Wrap up the process by pouring boiling water down the drain.

4. Kill Mould And Mildew With Vodka

Mould and mildew infestation in a home can pose serious health threats, especially for someone with asthma and low immunity. If you want to ensure a healthy indoor environment, check the damp or humid areas of your home and kill mould.

Instead of using harmful store-bought cleaners, apply vodka to achieve desired results. The alcohol product is effective for cleaning mould from your bathroom tiles, curtains and bathtub.

Spray unflavoured vodka over the affected area and let it rest for 10 minutes. After that, gently scrub using a brush and rinse the area.

Tip: Let the surface dry completely.

5. Steam Clean Your Microwave

This viral hack is creating a buzz in the cleaning industry. According to professional end of lease cleaners in Sydney, you can place a bowl of water, a cup of vinegar and a few drops of lemon essential oil in the microwave.

Turn on your microwave for 2 minutes. Let the door closed for 5-7 minutes. This will allow the steam to break down burnt food particles, built-up grease and gunk from the interiors. In the final step, wipe down the walls and surface using a damp cloth or sponge.

6. Remove Water Stains With A Shaving Cream

Believe it or not! Water stains from your window glass surfaces and mirrors can be removed with shaving cream. You just need to spread shaving cream over the surface and let it sit for 10 minutes. After that, wipe down with a microfiber cloth. You can also clean kitchen wood cabinets using this hack.

7. Eliminate Toilet Stains Using Borax

A toilet bowl is a prime source of fecal bacteria, which can lead to various health hazards. So, you should regularly clean it using the right product.

If you are looking for a sustainable hack for your toilet bowl, use borax powder. Mix borax powder with lavender essential oil and white vinegar. Pour this solution down the bowl and scrub it with a toilet brush.

Close the lid for 10 minutes and scrub it again to break down stubborn stains. Flush the soap residue and achieve shiny results.

8. Deodorise Carpets With Baking Soda

Whether it is pet stains or grime, carpets take a lot of wear and tear on a regular basis. If you want to keep them clean and refreshed, use this viral hack. Sprinkle a generous amount of baking soda and let it sit overnight. This will absorb musty smell and kill germs and bacteria without causing any discolouration.

9. Use Rubber Glove For Pet Hair

It is hard to overlook this hack for all pet parents in Sydney, NSW. If you are tired of removing pet hair or fur from your upholstery furniture or carpet, try this super-viral hack.

Wear rubber gloves and run your hand over delicate coverings. This will create friction and help grab stuck hair with ease.

10. Polish Wood Surface With Olive Oil

Natural oils can restore the original shine of your hardwood surfaces like tables, chairs and floors. Olive oil is a great option as a furniture polish.

Professional end of lease cleaners in Sydney also use this hack to help tenants secure their bond money. So, mix equal parts of olive oil, 1 vinegar or lemon juice in a bowl to create a product. Damp a cloth and wipe down your finished wood surface.

The viral cleaning hacks in this article will help you maintain a clean, shiny and beautiful abode without any stress. The best part is that you don't need fancy and expensive products or tools to tackle dust, dirt and stains. Use basic ingredients from a kitchen pantry to maintain the cleanliness standard of your home.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, consistent home maintenance in Sydney is vital for preserving the value and comfort of your property. By following the essential tips in this guide, you can prevent costly repairs and ensure a safe, welcoming environment for years to come. Invest in your home's future with regular upkeep and smart maintenance practices in Sydney.

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