

YOUR ESSENTIAL HOME MAINTENANCE GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 2026



Have you recently completed your new home build, a major renovation or extension? This guide includes practical tips and handy checklists for planning essential tasks to help keep your new home at its best.

Why home maintenance is so important

The Queensland Home Warranty Scheme (QHWS) can cover you for incomplete or defective building work. However, your policy won't cover you for damage caused by wear and tear, gradual deterioration or lack of maintenance. By carrying out regular maintenance, you're helping to safeguard your property against avoidable damages and make sure small problems don't become big ones.

Responsibilities of the homeowner

Once your new home or renovation is complete, you need to make sure that the foundations are not subject to abnormal moisture changes. If the surrounding moisture conditions of the foundations are not properly maintained, it can cause or contribute to cracking of walls and floors due to movement. If the damage is attributed to your responsibilities as an owner, you may be liable for the repair.

Additional Resources

QBCC Home Owner Hub



Foundation Maintenance and Footing Performance

Go to: <https://research.csiro.au/infratech/btr>



Responsibilities of the builder

When building your home, the builder needs to comply with the National Construction Code (NCC), relevant Australian Standards, approved designs, specifications and contract documents.

Builders need to:

- Ensure water does not pond near the site.
- Ensure the site drains throughout the construction process and water is free flowing on completion.
- Ensure owners understand how to maintain adequate site drainage to their home to avoid damage to the footings and structure.
- Provide owners with a plan showing the location of all 'as installed' sewer pipes, stormwater drains, water and gas lines. This will help with any future modifications or repairs.

Foundation movement

Soil type, location and the water content of soils can cause building foundations to move, this often occurs seasonally. This is known as subsidence or heaving. Some minor damage to homes from foundation movement is normal and expected, but more serious issues should be investigated to identify the cause.

Acceptable:

- ✓ Hairline cracks or cracks in walls and ceilings less than 5mm wide
- ✓ Concrete floors with hairline cracks less than 2mm wide

Not acceptable:

- ✗ Cracks over 5mm wide in walls and ceilings
- ✗ A group of cracks 3mm wide
- ✗ Noticeably bulging walls
- ✗ Doors and windows that stick and distort
- ✗ Concrete floors with cracks wider than 2mm

If your house has any of the issues that are not acceptable under the Standard it is possible you have a subsidence problem. You need to contact your builder in the first instance. See the QBCC Website for more information on subsidence matters.

CHECKLIST

It's important to engage a licensed contractor to help with any maintenance or repairs to building work.

Bathroom

Clean and check your tiles, grout, cupboards and other bathroom fittings.

Check taps, showerheads and toilets for leaks.

Check under vanities and basins for signs of water staining or dripping pipes.

Engage a licensed contractor to inspect any cracked tiles or damage to your shower base.

Check the silicone sealant, especially around the base of the shower and where screens meet walls and bases to make sure the silicone is not separating from the tiles.

If any walls back onto wet areas, check inside cupboards and behind bathroom fittings to make sure water has not seeped through.

Kitchen and laundry

Clean and check your tiles, grout, cupboards and other kitchen and laundry fittings.

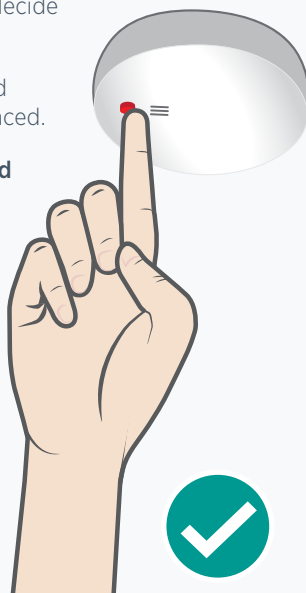
Inspect flexi hoses for small leaks that may show as drops of water around the hose. Call in a licensed plumber to inspect your flexi hoses to decide if they need to be replaced.

Arrange for your rangehood filters to be cleaned or replaced.

Test your smoke alarms and engage an appropriately licenced contractor to replace if needed.

Replace any fire extinguishers or fire blankets if needed.

Check your dishwasher and cabinets for any signs of leaks or water damage, such as swollen cabinetry or pooling water.



Plumbing

Check all plumbing fixtures for leaks, water damage or mould. As this can be difficult to spot, look for discolouration on plasterboard or new 'bubbles' in old paintwork.

Blockages can develop in pipes that aren't used much, so run water through drains and toilets regularly.

Check your water bill. Excessively high water readings may be a sign of a water leak.



Ventilation and heating

To keep exhaust fans working effectively, remove any dust or lint from the vents to prevent moisture build-up.

Air your home on dry, sunny days by simply opening your windows.

Use an exhaust fan in your kitchen, bathroom and laundry to reduce moisture.

If you are considering installing one, contact an appropriately licensed contractor.

Schedule annual heating, venting and air conditioning maintenance.

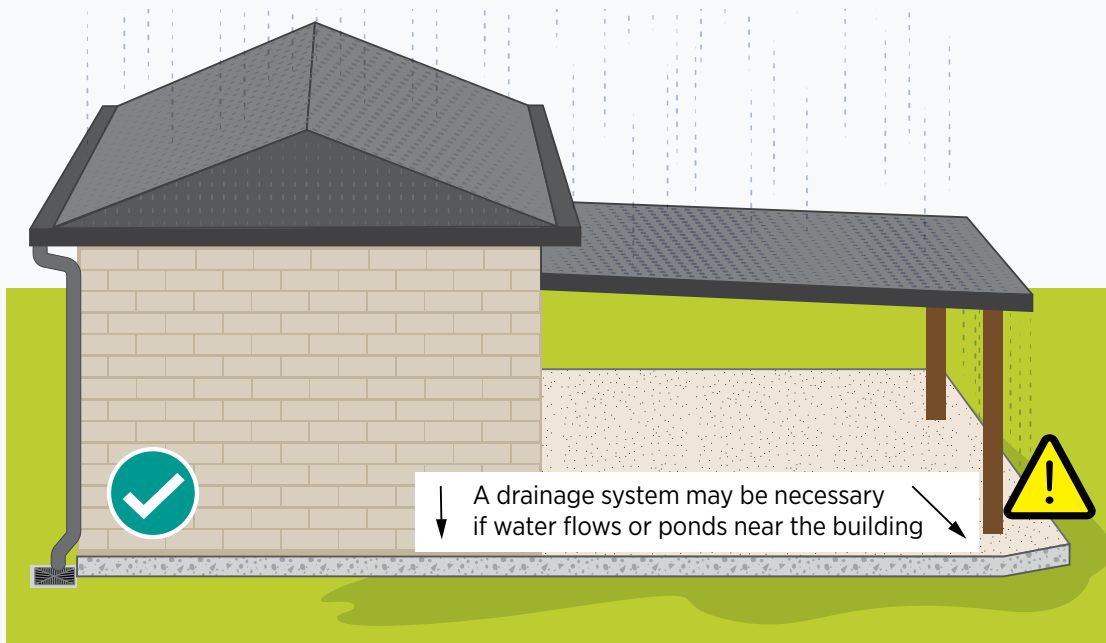


Roof and exterior

Remove any leaves or debris from drains, downpipes and gutters that could potentially cause blockages.

Trim trees and shrubs near your house, fences or sheds to help prevent damage from falling branches, clogged drains or gutters.

Make sure water flows away from the property, including sheds and granny flats during rainfall. Water draining towards your property could harm its foundations.



Get your roof checked by an appropriately licensed contractor to make sure it's in good condition and secure.

Inspect window sills, doorways and thresholds for leaks or cracks.

Check, repair and repaint any walls with cracks, peeling paint or loose weatherboard.

Consider removing trees or hedges close to your property. Did you know that roots seeking moisture can burst pipes and cause water leaks? Monitor the ground around your property for signs of sinking or shifting, just in case.

Get swimming pool pumps serviced by an appropriately licensed contractor.

If you have solar panels, get them checked for any build-up of leaves or debris to reduce any potential fire risk.

Ensure that you follow the termite system maintenance schedule as per the manufacturer's specifications.

Pests

Check your property and its surroundings for signs of termites and pests.

Ensure that you follow the termite system maintenance schedule as per the manufacturer's specifications.



Fencing and decking

If your fences and decking show signs of rot, rust, deterioration, or loose posts, consider replacing them.

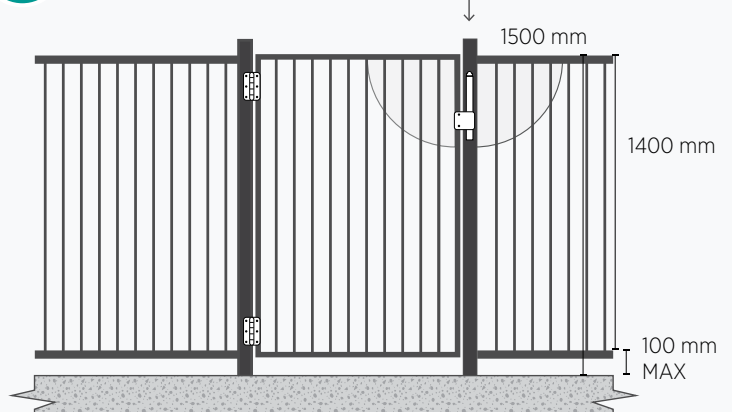
Clean and reseal decking.

Check that your pool fences are still compliant with safety regulations.

Check your property and its surroundings for signs of termites and pests.



The gate latch, located on the inside is 150mm from the top of the fence and is covered with a 450mm radius shield



YOUR GUIDE TO HOME MAINTENANCE

Roofs

We often receive complaints about roof leaks. In some cases, this is due to defective building work, but often leaks are caused by lack of maintenance and cleaning. Avoid roof leaks by undertaking regular maintenance and cleaning.

To do:

- ☐ Don't let leaves and debris build up in gutters and downpipes.
- ☐ Repair or replace any cracked or broken tiles, guttering or flashing.
- ☐ Clean valley gutters regularly.

Termites

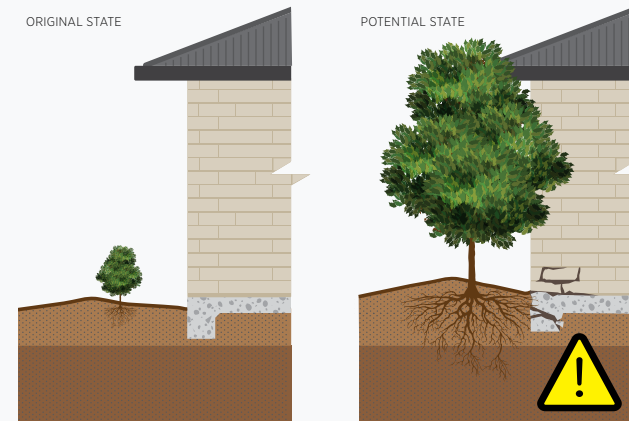
It's important to have an appropriate termite management system in place. Your building should be inspected and serviced regularly in accordance with the installed system. Most systems require a licensed pest controller to perform services at least every 12 months.

Foundations, footings and slab

Significant changes in moisture can cause issues with your foundations. It is important that the foundations that support the edges of your footings are not exposed to excess moisture, such as water ponding against footings or walls.

To do:

- ☐ Ensure your home's site drainage is properly directed away from the foundations.
- ☐ Plant landscaping and gardens away from your home.
- ☐ Do not include automated watering systems close to footings.
- ☐ Paths or paving adjacent to your building maintain the appropriate slope away from the building and not trap water against the footings.
- ☐ Leaks are repaired immediately.
- ☐ Avoid excavating too close to the building so that you don't undermine the footings or cause ponding water.
- ☐ Repair minor cracking as part of normal building maintenance.



Drainage

It's important to keep the site well drained by avoiding altering the site drainage and maintaining the existing drainage installed by your builder.

If you need to alter the site drainage to remove excess water, make sure you direct water away from your home and adjoining properties. You should seek advice from an appropriately licensed contractor about any drainage work.

To do:

- ☐ Regularly maintain your drainage to remove any leaves and debris build up in gutters and downpipes. Leaking or blocked gutters can cause overflow near the external walls of your home.
- ☐ Make sure the roof of any related structures adjacent to your home have gutters draining away from your home.
- ☐ Do not drive over any shallow drainpipes. This may break or cause damage to the pipes resulting in leaks.
- ☐ Check that drainage is free flowing during storms and weather events.
- ☐ Clean drainage pits regularly to remove grass and debris to ensure sufficient drainage.

Rainwater tanks

Many Queenslanders are now installing rainwater tanks to new and existing homes, and these must be considered as part of your home maintenance.

To do:

- ☐ Regularly clean debris and insect screens on tanks and rainwater heads.
- ☐ Check for leaking pipe work.
- ☐ Avoid leaking or overflowing water tanks near building footings.
- ☐ Ensure water tank overflow discharges to the legal point of discharge.

Charged water systems are a significant cause of movement. Above ground drainage pipes should be regularly checked for leaks as soon as possible after rain. Tap on the downpipes and pipes leading to the tank, they should feel solid and full of water. Any leaking or damaged pipes must be rectified urgently.

Landscaping and gardens

Landscaping can make a huge difference to how your home looks, however you need to consider site drainage and surface levels when planning and maintaining your gardens.

A well landscaped garden will direct water away from the building ensuring that water does not pool near the footings.

If trees don't receive sufficient water, their roots can dry up the soil near the building or under pavements. Generally, the larger the tree or hedge, the more they will dry out the soil.

If you want to remove trees, you should consult a registered engineer who is familiar with footing movement.

To do:

- ☐ Keep trees, hedges and gardens away from your home.
- ☐ Trees and hedges should be planted at least 1-1½ times the mature height away from a building, so they don't interfere with the footings.
- ☐ Avoid overwatering gardens.
- ☐ Unregulated sprinkler systems should not be installed.
- ☐ Ensure that brick weep holes do not end up below soil levels.

Paths and adjacent concrete

Concrete paths, paving and subgrades must be installed with the appropriate fall to drain away from any building or related roofed structure. A drain may be required for larger paved areas.

To do:

- ☐ Ensure you maintain the minimum required slope (50mm in 1 metre) for surfaces adjacent to the building.

Hot water and air conditioning systems

A leaky hot water or air-conditioning system presents a real risk to your home's foundation movement and could cause building damage and termite attack. These should not discharge water near the buildings footings, as this may change the soil moisture conditions.

To do:

- ☐ Get a copy of your hot water and air conditioning systems manufacturer's instructions and follow the recommended maintenance procedure.
- ☐ Make sure that water discharged from air-conditioning systems does not drain onto the ground near the footings.

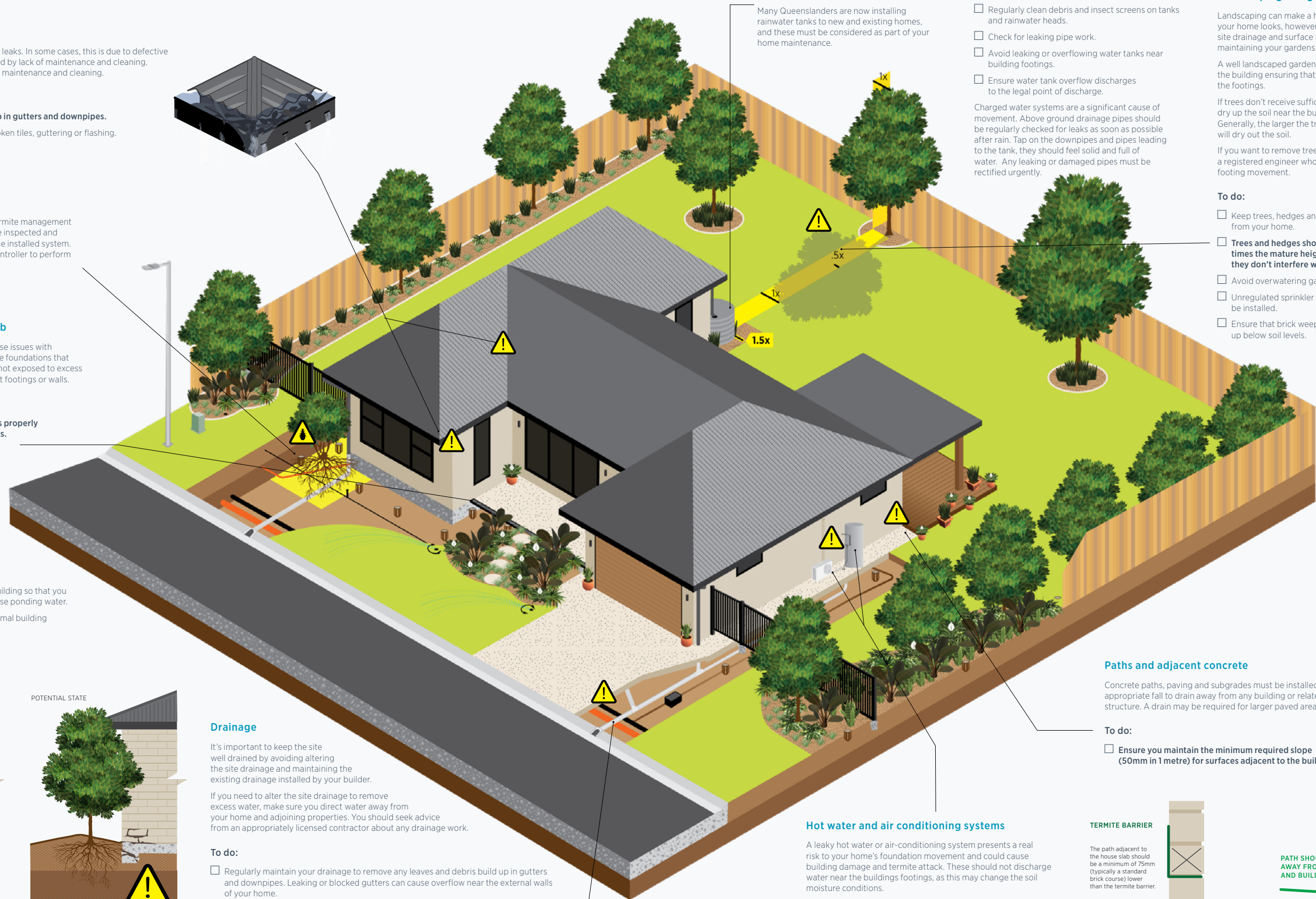
TERMITE BARRIER

The path adjacent to the house slab should be a minimum of 75mm (typically a standard brick course) lower than the termite barrier.

HOUSE SLAB HEIGHT 0

PATH SHOULD SLOPE AWAY FROM STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS

50mm



Need more information?

Visit qbcc.qld.gov.au / call **139 333** / write to **PO Box 5099, Brisbane Qld 4001** /    

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