

Every house needs a brush-up

It can pay to leave the painting to a professional.

EVEN in tough times, homeowners can't afford to let maintenance of what is probably their most valuable asset get behind.

"They definitely shouldn't let it slide," Louis Buchet, of L B Painting Services, says.

He recommends people who can't spare the cash to paint their houses from top to bottom do so in stages.

"Rather than letting it get into a terrible state, break it up into affordable chunks – every couple of years get the painters in for a bit of paint-maintenance.

"We have done work like this in recent years where we spend a week doing a list of remedial work in order of priority."

Mr Buchet says this can be on an hourly rate or contract basis.

"This allows people to stay on top of maintenance issues and saves them money in the long run."

The risk of deferring maintenance is paint that deteriorates too much will need to be stripped off, "as there comes a time where the existing paint is no longer sound to be painted over", Mr Buchet says.

"Exposed substrate can begin to rot too. Both situations mean a big escalation in cost to repair or replace.

"Paint stripping is labour – and material-intensive, and can cost as much as the painting. Building work is not cheap either.

"On the positive side, you have a fresh, sound start to your new paintwork. But it's going to cost you twice as much."

Mr Buchet understands why homeowners may want to do their own painting rather than hire a professional but points out they should weigh up the pros and cons beyond what they'll save in labour costs.

"These days any free time is precious. A professional painter can do twice as good a job in a quarter of the time it would take you to do it.

"We have all the right equipment and the knowledge of how to properly treat problem areas.

"And you won't spend half the year or all of your holiday break doing hard physical work – unless you like to. People underestimate the physicality of painting."

And the severity of the problems they could encounter.



"The unexpected items are what throw the average person out," Mr Buchet says. "In a perfect world you can follow the instructions from the paint tin or a book from the library. But every job has its challenges and pitfalls.

"Also, there are signs of trouble, such as unsound paint, that the untrained eye may not see. All your hard work could go to waste when

the underlying paint, which should have been stripped or treated with a certain product, lifts off.

"Finding other remedial work can be a pain, as you then have to bring in other trades such as plumbers for replacement guttering and downpipes, carpenters for building repairs, roofers etc etc.

"Doing the job ad-hoc means you have to keep rewashing the

surfaces down. You may forget where you were up to and leave things out. Or you may be tired due to using inferior equipment, and be tempted to cut corners.

"Unless you are very dedicated and diligent, this scale of job isn't for most people."

Mr Buchet has been painting houses since 2001. After an on-the-job apprenticeship, he set up his

own business to offer a service that emphasised standards and professionalism.

"The most common complaint we hear from people is of tradespeople – not just painters – who don't return calls, don't turn up at appointed times and disappear without explanation. We work to ensure that our customers never have that experience."

House work: Louis Buchet, of L B Painting Services, says people underestimate how long it takes to paint things, the preparation required and the hard physical work involved.

Photo: JOHN NICHOLSON