



Maintenance Cost Control Playbook

Troubleshoot first. Spend smarter. Protect the asset.



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How this guide will save you, the investor

Maintenance is one of the biggest areas where costs can quietly blow out for property investors. Too often, a small issue turns into an unnecessary call-out, the wrong trade attends, or the technician needs multiple visits because the cause was not clear.

We created this guide to give you a practical set of next steps and questions you can use with your tenant to either:

- Troubleshoot and resolve the issue quickly, without a trade attending, or
- Isolate the likely cause so the right trade can attend once, with the right information.

When troubleshooting solves the issue, it can remove the need for a trade entirely, meaning no call-out fee. Even when a trade is required, good troubleshooting and evidence makes the job easier, which typically means less time on site, and less time on site generally means lower costs.

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Start with safety and urgency, gather evidence, then work through the troubleshooting prompts before booking a trade. If you do need a trade, you'll be able to brief them properly so the work is completed faster, with fewer surprises.



The rules that protect you (NSW quick guide)

- **Landlord duty:** Keep the property in a **reasonable state of repair** (not “perfect”, but safe and functional).
- **Urgent vs non-urgent repairs:** NSW distinguishes urgent and non-urgent repairs, and tenants should contact the agent/landlord first.
- **Tenant arranged urgent repairs:** If urgent repairs aren’t addressed, a tenant can organise urgent repairs and seek reimbursement **up to \$1,000**, and you must reimburse within **14 days** once they provide written notice and receipts.
- **Access and notice:**
 - **Necessary repairs or maintenance:** at least **2 days’** notice each time.
 - **Urgent repairs:** no notice required.
 - **Smoke alarm entry notice:** regulations specify **2 business days** to inspect/assess, and at least **1 hour** to repair/replace (where applicable).

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The 7-step “Troubleshoot Before Trades” workflow

A simple decision system investors can follow:

1. **Safety first:** gas smell, sparking, flooding, sewage, no power to essentials, roof leak in storm → treat as urgent.
2. **Classify:** urgent or non-urgent (and confirm access rules).
3. **Triage questions:** ask the tenant the right questions (scripts below).
4. **Evidence:** photo, video, and a short written description.
5. **Low-risk checks:** basic resets and observations (no DIY repairs).
6. **Decision matrix:** approve immediate, quote first, or monitor.
7. **Close-out:** confirm resolution, update maintenance log, prevent repeats.

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Tenant triage scripts

(reduces call-out fees fast)

Power trip / no power

- “Have you checked with the neighbours if they have power?
Have you checked Ausgrid’s website to see if there is an outage in your street/area?”
- “Is it whole house or one circuit?”
- “Is the safety switch (RCD) tripped?”
- “Any burning smell or sparking?”
- “Can you send a photo of the switchboard and which switches are down?”

No hot water

- “Gas or electric hot water?”
 - Gas “has the pilot light gone out?”
 - Electric - “has it tripped in the meter box?”
- “Any error code, beeping, or flashing light?”
- “Is hot water off everywhere or just one tap?”
- “Can you send a photo of the unit, including any display?”

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Tenant triage scripts

(reduces call-out fees fast)

Air con not cooling

- “Is it blowing air at all?”
- “Any error code?”
- “When were filters last cleaned?”
- “Can you send a photo of the remote settings and indoor unit lights?”

Leaking tap / minor leak

- “Is it a drip, or flowing?”
- “Any water damage to cabinetry or flooring?”
- “Do you need to turn off at the mains?”
- “Photo and 10 second video please, plus location.”

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Troubleshooting library

(what we check before we call a trade)

These are *checks*, not repairs.

- Reset checks (RCD, appliance reset, thermostat settings)
- Blockage indicators (slow drain vs overflow, gurgling, odour)
- Appliance basics (clean filters, confirm power, error codes)
- Water source (one fixture vs whole property)

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Evidence checklist

(protects you at NCAT and speeds up quotes)

- 4 photos minimum
 - wide shot
 - close-up
 - surrounding damage
 - model/serial label if relevant
- 1 short video showing the problem happening
- Date/time it started and whether it's worsening
- Any safety risks mentioned by tenant

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Decision matrix: fix now, quote first, or monitor

Fix Now	Quote First	Monitor
Urgent category or active damage risk, for example: • water ingress • electrical hazard • blocked toilet	• Non-urgent • cosmetic • discretionary upgrades	Intermittent issues with no damage risk (until evidence is captured)

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Prevent repeat costs (Maitland practicals)

- Gutter and stormwater housekeeping before storm season
- Air conditioner filter reminders in peak periods, suggest 3 monthly
- Air conditoner service, and hydro clean if necessary, prior to Summer
- Plumber to check all taps at every call out to avoid repeated call outs
- Check flexi hoses regularly - if showing rust spots or signs of wear, replace to avoid costly insurance claim
- Annual Termite Inspection

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**Rubix
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If you're dealing with a maintenance issue right now, or you simply want a clearer plan for how maintenance is handled at your property, book a chat with Pat.



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