

UPDATED

# Mass polybutylene pipes failure in newly built WA homes blamed on manufacturer Iplex Australia



**John Flint** The West Australian  
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BGC and Delstrat groups appear to be off the hook for the huge costs arising from the mass failure of plumbing pipes installed in thousands of new homes across WA.

An investigation by the State's building industry regulator, Building and Energy, has determined "installation work practices and workmanship were not the cause of the pipe failures".

As many as 1200 WA homeowners have been caught up in the saga, which has seen water wreak huge and costly damage to properties. Property owners have called for all defective piping to be replaced because they fear more leaks and flooding.

The investigation's findings point the blame towards manufacturing defects in the Pro-fit polybutylene pipes made by Iplex Australia.

However, the manufacturer was not admitting liability on Wednesday night.

"We have not seen the findings of the (Building and Energy) investigation and don't know the basis for them, though (Building and Energy) have advised Iplex that their findings are preliminary and that the case remains open," a company spokesperson told The West.

"Whilst the work we have undertaken or commissioned to date does not identify a manufacturing defect, we will continue to engage with regulators, businesses and other stakeholders to gather further data and understand causality of the issue. At the same time, we acknowledge the frustration and inconvenience impacted homeowners have been facing.

"We have been doing extensive investigations which will be completed in the coming months, at which time we should have a better understanding of causation. We are continuing to consider a range of factors which may be relevant to determining root cause such as installation, building practices and environmental factors in Western Australia."

Most water leaks occurred in Pro-fit pipes manufactured between mid-2017 and mid-2022.



Defective polybutylene plumbing pipes have been stripped out of hundreds of new homes in WA due to water leaks and bursts that have caused huge damage NO

“As part of its investigation, Building and Energy conducted inspections at more than 50 properties where pipe failures occurred. These inspections found that installation work practices and workmanship were not the cause of the pipe failures,” a Building and Energy spokesperson told The West on Wednesday.

“Building and Energy also engaged independent materials experts to conduct laboratory testing of the samples retrieved. The findings have been referred to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), which administers national product safety legislation in Australia.”

The West has reported on the misery and anxiety experienced by homeowners who’ve had repeated leaks and want all the suspect piping replaced

One victim Anne Gerick said her family had to contend with three major pipe bursts since November last year.

“This has truly been a frustrating experience for so many people,” she said. “So many of us have already forked out thousands of dollars on repairs and insurance excess.”

Another unhappy owner Desiree Elvira said she and others were still in limbo, despite the regulator’s findings.

“It took my builder 60 hours to send out an emergency plumber, in that time my children and I had no water and no electricity - water was coming through the power points. It took over 16 emails to the builder and endless calls to get them to acknowledge the damage left behind by the plumber and it’s been over three months with no communication on when it will be repaired.”

So far, pipes in ceilings have been replaced in many homes, but not those pipes behind walls.

“Understandably these incidents have caused stress and inconvenience for many home owners,” Building and Energy Executive Director Saj Abdoolakhan said.

“Our investigation has been comprehensive and involved detailed laboratory work to determine if the cause was a product manufacturing issue, substandard workmanship during installation or a combination of both.

“As the plumbing regulator, we have formed the view that installation work practices were not the causes of these failures.

“The ACCC is best placed to manage any potential issues with products.”

Mr Abdoolakhan said home owners with concerns about Pro-fit pipes should continue to liaise with their builder until there are further updates.

In April, The West revealed that Iplex Australia had agreed to help construction companies BGC and Delstrat groups replace the pipes from ceilings in affected homes.

[‘Faulty’ pipes to remain in homes pending ‘top priority’ investigation by building industry regulator](#)

Parent company Fletcher Building said it would financially assist the two major Perth homebuilders. It put up \$15 million for the work.

“These are commercial proposals on a no-liability basis which do not address, nor are they based on, causation,” it said at the time.

The company, which stopped selling its Pro-fit brand of pipes on May 31 last year, is understood to be baffled by the mass failure in WA, given the pipes were used widely across the country without any reporting of anomalies.

It claimed about 1200 of the 15,000 houses constructed in WA using Pro-fit in the period mid-2017 to mid-2022 had experienced leaks.

Impacted homeowners are demanding all such piping is replaced, not just the sections that have torn and caused leaks.

Building and Energy has set up an online register for consumers to lodge their details if they are affected by burst pipes [here](#).