



Western Australia government probes injuries in homes with Fletcher’s Iplex pipes



By [Anne Gibson](#)

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A Western Australian government department’s consumer safety division is seeking information about injuries in Perth homes where Fletcher Building’s Iplex pipes are installed. The Government of WA’s Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety has sought details of cases where ceilings have collapsed, water has come through electrical sockets or light fittings or people have sought medical attention. Last April, Fletcher chief executive Ross Taylor announced issues with Pro-fit, blaming installation and workmanship, not product failure. Last October he dismissed as “sensationalist” a Perth builder’s claim of at least \$750m to fix failures. Fletcher went into a trading halt last year over the problems and established a \$15m fund while causes, resolution and industry solutions were developed, Taylor saying Fletcher was committed to helping the industry resolve issues. The Iplex Polybutylene Support/Possible Class Action Group posted on social media, showing the government department notice to a big builder.

 <p>Government of Western Australia Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety Consumer Protection</p>	
Fair Trading Act 2010 (WA)	NOTICE
<p>Failure to comply with this Notice is an offence under section 88(1) of the <i>Fair Trading Act 2010</i> with a maximum penalty of \$10,000.</p>	
To	BGC Residential Pty Ltd
Address	67 Walters Drive, Osborne Park WA 6017
Investigation or inquiry that is being carried out	See Annexure A to this Notice.
Requirement	You are required under section 69 of the <i>Fair Trading Act 2010</i> to: Give the information and produce the documents specified in Annexure B to this Notice.
...	
 <p>Government of Western Australia Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety Consumer Protection</p>	
ANNEXURE B	
SECTION 69 OF THE FAIR TRADING ACT 2010 (WA)	
NOTICE TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION	
<p>The following is required to assist in establishing whether there are grounds to facilitate a product recall in relation to the Iplex polybutylene 1 pipe manufactured using the Typlex-1050 polymer (PB-1 pipe), pursuant to section 122 of the Australian Consumer Law:</p>	
...	
8.	<p>The particulars of any injuries reported relating directly to the water leak, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the date of the injury, b. location at the property, c. victim's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. name, ii. age, iii. gender, iv. contact telephone number, v. contact email address, vi. body injury location, vii. injury sustained, and viii. whether hospitalised;

Notice to Perth builder BGC about Iplex pipes.

The department issued a notice to Perth’s BGC Residential calling for details about who was hurt and how. That asked for particulars of injuries, reported and relating directly to the water leak including the date of injury and location of the property. A spokesman for the Iplex group told the **Herald** that last month, the department widened that probe asking all consumers for

information about injuries from bursting Iplex pipes. The Australian investigation wants information by the end of the month.

CONSUMER PROTECTION IS REQUESTING INFORMATION

If you have been affected by the Iplex pipes issues, meet any of the following criteria and are willing to provide a witness / victim statement, we want to hear from you.

In particular, we are requesting your information if after 2017 you have:

- Suffered a physical injury as a result of burst Iplex pipes and sought medical attention and/or
- Had part of a ceiling collapse as a result of burst Iplex pipes and/or
- Had water coming out of electrical sockets and/or light fittings as a result of burst Iplex pipes

If you meet the above criteria, please reach out to us via pipes.enquiry@dmirs.wa.gov.au by 7 February 2024.

Notice from a Western Australian government department to people affected by the Iplex pipe issues.

A senior investigator with the department's consumer protection division, which is undertaking the investigation, explained why the probe was under way. "Consumer Protection has received a large number of responses ranging from damage to water leaking through electrical fittings. We are in the process of going through all the information received, which will be included in our assessment report and will be contacting some homeowners over the next couple of weeks to seek witness statements." Information was to establish "whether there are grounds to facilitate a product recall in relation to the Iplex polybutylene 1 pipe manufactured using the Typlex-1050 polymer (PB-1 pipe)". A Fletcher Building spokesman said today in response: "We understand that notice was sent to a number of builders by WA Consumer Protection as a part of its investigation." Asked for an update on the \$15m fund, he said that it was about half spent. "We've received no reports of any injuries and won't comment on the regulator's investigation." BGC wants the department to do a mandatory recall but the Australian house-builder and Fletcher Building are at loggerheads over the issue. Sam Gray, BGC's general manager of strategy and commercial in Perth, said this week 2600 bursts had occurred in 1352 homes in his city. He knew of "hundreds" of complaints about leaks in Iplex pipes. People were being "zapped" when water and electricity combined and lives were in danger, he said. It cost around A\$60,000 to put new water pipes in the Perth homes affected, Gray said. On August 16, Western Australia's building and plumbing regulator announced preliminary findings from its investigation into water leaks in Perth homes from a particular brand of polybutylene pipe. Building and Energy's investigation focused on identifying the cause of failure of Pro-fit polybutylene pipes made by Iplex Australia. Most water leaks occurred in pipes manufactured between mid-2017 and mid-2022, it said.

As part of its investigation, Building and Energy conducted inspections at more than 50 properties where pipe failures occurred, saying installation work practices and workmanship were not the cause of the pipe failures. But it didn't say what caused the pipe problems. Building and Energy also engaged independent materials experts to conduct laboratory testing of the samples retrieved. The findings have been shared with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Consumer Protection as regulators of national product safety legislation, it said.



Fletcher Building CEO Ross Taylor. Photo / Michael Craig

Last October, Fletcher's Taylor named four poor pipe installation practices in Perth:

- Over-bending of pipes where elbows were required if pipes were bent at certain angles;
- Inadequate movement was allowed for, where a pipe was fixed in the wall through rigid mortar;
- Poor and at times non-existent lagging or wrapping;
- Damage and workmanship issues, with pipes bent across metal nails and kinked, causing stress points.

Fletcher shares are trading around \$4.24. Its half-year result to December 31, 2023 is out next Wednesday. **Anne Gibson has**

been the ***Herald's*** property editor for 24 years, has won many awards, written books and covered property extensively here and overseas.