

Public Release – Position Paper 2025.1 WA Position Paper: Inspection of Residential Iplex Pipes – April 25

The Industry Association of Building and Property Inspectors in WA Inc – Inspect WA is pleased to announce the release of its Position Paper 2025.1 Inspection of Iplex Pipes by WA Building Inspectors.

1 Background on the Underlying Issues

1. A number of Western Australian homes fitted with Pro-fit Typlex 1050 resin polybutylene plumbing pipes (Typlex pipes), manufactured by Iplex Australia, have experienced water leaks (i.e plumbing failures).
2. It is estimated that the construction date for the most affected properties impacted by this issue ranged from 2017 to 2022.
3. The primary problem with Iplex polybutylene pipes in Western Australia (WA) is that a significant number of homes have experienced leaks due to either manufacturing defects in the pipes, particularly those manufactured with Typlex 1050 resin or installation issues. The manufacture denies there are manufacturing issues and suggests that the issues is more related to poor installation practices than defects with the underlying pipes.
4. A Class Action has been issued in the Federal Court of Australia on behalf of all current and former owners of properties in Australia in which Iplex "Pro-fit" polybutylene pipe products manufactured using TYPLEX-1050 resin (Typlex Resin) between 2017 and 2022 (Pipes) are installed (the Iplex Class Action).
5. Where faulty pipes are found in a residential property the issues are not necessarily issue to be resolved.
 - a. Pipe locations
 - i. Ceilings
 1. Pipes can be found throughout the ceiling void. If they leak ceilings, insulation walls can be adversely impacted.
 - ii. Walls
 1. Pipes are often chassed into various wall including walls in kitchens, bathrooms, ensuites and laundries. Traditionally the most expensive rooms in a property. Remediation requires substantial work including brickwork, render, plaster, waterproofing, fixtures, cabinets, woodwork etc.
 - iii. Floors
 1. Pipes can be chassed or embedded into floors including floors in kitchens, bathrooms, ensuites and laundries. Traditionally the most expensive rooms in a property. Remediation requires substantial

work including cement work, brickwork, render, plaster, waterproofing, fixtures, cabinets, woodwork etc.

6. Inspect WA believed that the cost of remediation of Iplex pipes issues can range from thousands through to hundreds of thousands of dollars depending on the extent of potential issues. Cost drivers can include:
 - a. Extent and diversification of pipe work
 - b. Number of rooms impacted within a residence
 - c. The potential need to gut wet areas and replace brickwork, render, waterproofing, tiling cabinetry, ceilings, insulation, woodwork, painting etc
 - d. The potential need to relocate property occupants while remediation work is undertaken.

2 Issues for Sellers and Buyers

1. There are potentially substantial issues for sellers and buyers of residential properties in WA.
2. Sellers may not be aware that the property they are selling could be impacted by the above issue.
3. Buyers may not be aware that the property they are buying could, has or might be impacted by the above issue. Even if the issue is disclosed to them, Buyers may not fully understand the impacts of the underlying issue.
4. Remediation and liability for the underlying issue is still not clear so seller and buyers could still be adversely impacted.

3 Checking Iplex Pipes is not as easy as it sounds

1. Checking Iplex pipes is not as easy as it sounds, considerable caution is required.
2. We have several concerns given the potential liabilities on building inspectors. Some of these issues include:
 - a. There is often very limited access space within roof voids to enable the inspection of the pipes.
 - b. Visibility of pipes is often obstructed by timbers, insulation, ducting and similar.
 - c. Pipes chassed into walls and floors may not be able to be seen.
 - d. Pipes are often fixed to timbers so that they cannot be twisted so that reading the pipe information stamped onto the pipe cannot be achieved.
 - e. Often manufactures details on pipes have been damaged such that the information cannot be extracted.
3. There are more challenges when there is a mixture of pipework within a property i.e cooper and iplex (i.e past partial repairs by Builder)
4. Moving insulation (to identify pipes) is generally outside the scope of AS 4349.1 – visual only.
5. There is an issue of who will cover the cost of damage if a pipe is moved to read printed data on a pipe and the pipe leaks or bursts causing substantial damage to the property.
6. An inspection of the pipes may require an extensive and timely search of the entire roof space.
7. Much of the pipework will be embedded in the walls and cannot be seen.
8. Building Inspectors insurers may not cover plumbing issues so there may be Professional Indemnity Insurance issues/restrictions.

9. Validation of build times for the property, to identify the probability of the property being constructed during the target period. Currently this is only estimated based on other tell tales on site and is rarely formally disclosed by sellers or their agents without substantial disclaimers.

4 Australian Standards for Building Inspections AS 4349.1

1. Building Inspectors need to carefully consider if the Inspection of Iplex pipes is within the scope of their work.
2. Inspecting strictly under AS 4349.1 Appendix A (The REIWA Annexure) would exclude the inspection of Iplex pipes.
3. Inspecting under AS 4349.1 has several potential challenges. Key areas for consideration within the Standard include:
 - a. 1.4.2 Accessible area
 - i. An area of the site where sufficient, safe and reasonable access is available to allow inspection within the scope of the inspection.
 - b. 1.4.7 Inspection
 - i. Close and careful scrutiny of a building carried out without dismantling, in order to arrive at a reliable conclusion as to the condition of the building.
 - c. 2.3.2 Areas for inspection
 - i. The inspection shall cover all accessible areas.
 - ii. The client shall arrange right of entry, facilitate physical entry to the property and supply necessary information to enable the inspector to undertake the inspection and prepare a report. The inspector is not responsible for arranging entry to property or parts of property.
 - iii. Areas where reasonable entry is denied to the inspector, or where reasonable access is not available, are excluded from, and do not form part of, the inspection.
 - iv. The inspector shall inspect an elevated area only where—
 1. (a) it is at a height at which safe reasonable access is available, or where safe and reasonable access is otherwise available; or
 2. (b) an unobstructed line of sight is present from safe use of a 3.6 m ladder and the building elements present are close enough to allow appraisal.
 - d. 4.2.5 Limitations
 - e. The report shall identify any area or item within the scope of an inspection that was not inspected and the factor that prevented inspection.
 - f. NOTE: Areas where inspection was restricted (such as by insulation, air conditioning ducts or pipework) with recommendations to gain access where practicable and considered necessary, should be included in the report.
4. Inspect WA recommends that Building Inspector's do not inspect Iplex Pipes in residential properties. If they choose to inspect those pipes, then the terms of their engagement must be very specific to ensure
 - a. That they have the skills to undertake what is required
 - b. The scope of the work to be undertaken clearly defined and agreed
 - c. There exposure and liability is appropriate managed

5 The Associations position is:

1. The issue of Iplex pipe failure is real and adversely impacts thousands of WA residential property owners. The true extent of the issue is not fully understood.
2. Currently it is only estimated that properties constructed between 2017 and 2022 are impacted, but this cannot be confirmed.
3. Buyers should be given clear and frank disclosure if a property is or is likely to be impacted by the Iplex pipe issues prior to entering a Purchase Contract.
4. Building Inspectors, who should be WA Registered Builders, are not the best profession to inspect plumbing pipework and should avoid doing this work. WA Licensed Plumbers should undertake this work.
5. WA Building Inspection members should avoid undertaking inspections on properties for Iplex pipes. If they accept the work, then the scope of the engagement must be documented as a non-standard inspection request and clearly understood by all parties.
6. Property buyers should demand formal written disclosures from Property Sellers, particularly for properties constructed during the period 2017 to 2022, as to whether or no Iplex pipes have been used during the construction or remediation of plumbing work on the property.
7. Property Buyers should add a specific clause within their Purchase Contracts which entitles them to:
 - a. Have a WA Licensed Plumber inspect the plumbing pipes in the property being purchased.
 - b. Where suspect Iplex pipes are identified the Buyer should have the right to terminate the contract.

6 Summary

1. Iplex pipe issues are real and is causing WA residential property owners' considerable hardship.
2. Property buyers need appropriate disclosure prior to entering Purchase Contracts.
3. Buyers should be afforded the opportunity to engage a WA Licensed Plumber to undertake a thorough inspection of the property for Iplex pipes. Where pipes are identified, Buyers should have the right to terminate the Purchase Contract.
4. WA Building Inspection members should avoid undertaking inspections on properties for Iplex pipes. If they accept the work, then the scope of the engagement must be documented a non-standard inspection request and clearly understood by all parties.

Chairman
Inspect WA
April 25

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