



Reducing pipe waste: PVC Recycling in action.

Vinidex in conjunction with Plastics Industry Pipe Association of Australia (PIPA) and the Master Plumbers Association of QLD (MPAQ) is demonstrating its role in contributing to a responsible and sustainable future by closing the loop; recycling old pipes into new ones.

With the Queensland government providing funding for the 6 month pilot of the program across 5 plumbing branches, results were reviewed and further additional funding has been granted from the Queensland government to expand the scheme. There has been growing excitement as more stores are looking to partner with Vinidex to have their customers drop off PVC pipe waste for recycling at Vinidex sites, which is now possible with the additional funding and expansion of the scheme.

The program called the Construction Plastics Recycling Scheme has been well received in Queensland. Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland's Executive Director, Penny Cornah, quoting the scheme has been developed to help industry understand the volume of available PVC pipe offcuts and fittings from construction sites. "Our goal is to educate and change behaviours when it comes to the disposal of PVC offcuts, which can be recycled into a new long-life recyclable pipe product," Ms Cornah said at the program launch in 2021. "This scheme highlights the environmental commitments of not only the partners involved but also the industry as a whole."

The Construction Plastics Recycling Scheme officially began in late 2021, with collection bins delivered to seven participating locations across South East Queensland, providing alternative outlets for PVC off-cuts to be discarded. The off-cuts collected in these bins during the Scheme were audited and data recorded.



Plastics Industry Pipe Association of Australia's Executive General Manager, Cindy Bray, said most plastic pipes installed throughout Australia are 100% recyclable and can be easily reprocessed and manufactured into new pipe.

Vinidex provided collections bins at two Reece branches, PICAC - The Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre and a construction site as a part of the scheme within the trial phase. Once the collection bins were delivered to these sites, the bins were filled over a period of time then collected to be brought back to the Vinidex Brisbane manufacturing site. Then pipes were inspected, cleaned and run through shredding and granulation machinery before being put back into the pipe raw materials mix, creating new long-life recycled pipes, which after their long service life can be recycled again.



The Construction Plastics Recycling Scheme focuses on reusing the PVC offcuts in non-pressure pipe or fittings applications. "PVC pipe can be recycled six to seven times without significant reduction in pipe material quality requirements, highlighting the many benefits to collecting and recycling the off-cuts," Ms Bray said at the commencement of the scheme.

"Assuming a pipe lifetime of 100 years, the PVC material in PVC pipes may have a lifetime in excess of 600 years."

Overall, the process of producing, recycling and reusing pipes has positive environmental effects, highlighting the benefits of implementing the Construction Plastics Recycling Scheme. Plastic pipes are smart, efficient and sustainable, providing long-lasting and reliable infrastructure both now and into the future.

An official launch event was held at Reece Plumbing branch in Labrador, with The Hon. Meaghan Scanlon MP, minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and minister for Science and Youth Affairs, attending the launch.

Minister Meaghan Scanlon said at the scheme commencement that the Construction Plastics Recycling Scheme was a clear example of a "circular economy" in motion.

"As we move towards making Queensland a truly sustainable state operating on a circular economy – where waste is reduced and resources are recovered and re-used – initiatives such as the Construction Plastics Recycling Scheme can play a major role in achieving our goals," Ms Scanlon said.

The scheme has attracted great interest from those keen to contribute to the circular economy. With the additional funding provided by the QLD government to extend and broaden the trial the scheme can continue to educate and change behaviours to increase recycling of PVC off-cuts.

