



**Australian Government**

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**Department of Defence**  
Defence Support and Reform Group

**Defence Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) Policy**  
**Version 1.0 January 2014**

**Policy Objective**

The two primary policy objectives for the use and disposal of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) in the Defence Built Environment (includes all applications associated with the Defence Estate) is to:

1. Use “Best Practice PVC” products and avoid standard PVC products in flooring designs, flooring fit-outs and flooring replacements; and
2. Minimise the whole of life environmental impact of PVC used in the Defence Built Environment.

**Scope**

This policy applies to PVC products used in flooring for building construction, flooring fit-outs, and flooring related estate maintenance activities (including the replacement of existing PVC containing products) and disposal requirements for all PVC products.

**Context**

PVC is a synthetic solid resin material (a plastic). It is also commonly referred to as vinyl<sup>1</sup>. “Best-Practice PVC” refers to certified products that meet the Green Building Council of Australia’s “Best Practice Guidelines for PVC in the Built Environment”. All other products containing PVC are referred to as “Standard PVC”.

The “Common uses” of PVC in Australia includes: conduits, pipes, fittings, floorings, resilient wall coverings, cables, wire insulation, windows frames and doors.

A major concern with PVC is the risk of toxic air emissions during the manufacturing process, which has the potential to impact on human health and the environment. These toxic air emissions include but are not limited to mercury, vinyl chloride monomer, ethylene dichloride, dioxin emissions and phthalates. Other concerns are

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<sup>1</sup> Green Building Council Australia 2010.

related to the disposal of PVC including the accidental burning of PVC products and the leaching of contaminants from PVC products being disposed at landfills.

### ***Industry Standards***

The Vinyl Council of Australia has established a PVC Product Stewardship Program, which was endorsed by the Minister for Environment and Heritage in 2002. The program aims to reduce the environmental impacts associated with the manufacturing and disposal of PVC in Australia, particularly the minimisation of toxic air emissions released into the environment.

The PVC Expert Reference Panel, formed by the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA), published in 2011 the “Best Practice Guidelines for PVC in the Built Environment”.

The “Best Practice Guidelines for PVC in the Built Environment” identifies opportunities for the minimisation of environmental and health risk impacts throughout the PVC life cycle. The Guidelines include strict minimum compliance requirements for PVC supply chain constituents, PVC resin production, PVC product manufacture and end of life management. Products must comply with these requirements in order to be certified as “Best Practice PVC”.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL OBLIGATIONS**

### **Authority**

The Assistant Secretary of Environment and Engineering is the Technical Authority for infrastructure engineering and environmental policy within Defence.

### **Legislation**

There is currently no Federal or State/Territory government legislation that specifically addresses PVC issues; however Defence and its contractors are bound by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)* to prevent significant environmental impacts.

### **PVC Commitment**

The *Defence Environmental Strategic Plan 2010-2014* requires Defence “to integrate sustainable environmental management, including resource efficiency and pollution prevention, into Defence activities, business processes and decisions”. Consequently, Defence must promote the use of “Best Practice PVC” products or more cost effective and environmentally sensitive non-PVC alternatives in infrastructure design and procurement in line with industry initiatives and standards.

## **Environmental Requirements (ER)**

**ER1(a):** “Best Practice PVC” or suitably cost-effective and environmentally sensitive non-PVC alternatives must be used for flooring in new buildings, flooring in fit outs or in flooring replacements.

**ER1(b)** Subject to **ER1(a)**, “Standard PVC” products for flooring may only be used where it is clearly demonstrated in facility designs that there are no suitably cost-effective and environmentally sensitive non-PVC alternatives or “Best Practice PVC” products available.

**ER2:** All PVC products must be recycled and/or reused when being disposed. However, if it is demonstrated that there are no recycling options available, PVC products must be disposed of at a licensed landfill facility.

**ER3:** No PVC products are to be burnt or incinerated.

## **Implementation Framework**

This policy will be primarily delivered through the *SMART Infrastructure Manual (Part C: Design Development & Construction and Part D: Operation and Maintenance)* during the design and operational stage for any building/construction works. It will also stand as an independent reference when relevant.

Part C will be implemented by Design Consultants and Construction Contractors, whilst Part D will be implemented by the Base Services Contractors, Senior Environmental Managers and Regional Environmental Officers.

This policy combined with the *Defence Environmental Strategic Plan 2010-2014* and *SMART Infrastructure Manual* will ensure Defence will be a leader in sustainable environmental management to support the ADF’s capability and its national interests.



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