

PVC Industry Product Stewardship Program

Commitment on Pigments

The PVC industry in Australia accounts for only a small proportion of the total consumption of cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments, which are used in a wide range of applications across a number of sectors. Alternatives are available for use, although there may be technical and commercial constraints in moving to these for some applications. However, Signatories to the PVC industry Product Stewardship Program are committed to removing toxic heavy metals from PVC products as reflected in the ongoing progress to remove lead stabilisers and the phase out of cadmium stabilisers.

A number of Australian PVC manufacturers have already ceased the use of cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments, or are publicly committed to phasing them out within a specified timeframe. Only a small number of Signatories are currently using them, because of the specific colour and technical properties these metals offer as pigments and the importance of colour to the application for safety reasons (eg in the case of conduit), or aesthetic reasons (eg in the case of certain consumer products).

Given this, a reduction in use of cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments by Signatories to the Product Stewardship Program will have a small impact on the total amount of these compounds used in Australia.

Nevertheless, Signatories:

- Agree to review the technical feasibility of replacing cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments in existing product lines and to report results of the review;
- Agree to substitute by 2010 the use of cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments where technically feasible and suitable alternatives are available.
- Agree to cease the use of cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments in development of new products if suitable alternatives for the application exist.
- Agree to a Policy on the Use of Lead, Cadmium and Hexavalent Chrome in which Signatories
 - Adhere to relevant Australian Standards, and agree not to use cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome pigments in sensitive applications (eg, toys, childcare articles, potable water products, food contact).
 - Agree to ensure good industrial hygiene practices in the PVC industry to protect employees and the community from exposure to pigments and manage pigment-contaminated wastes appropriately.
 - Will seek assistance (via the Vinyl Council) from government in developing safety-net regulation if required to underpin the reduction commitment.
 - Agree to report their usage of cadmium, lead and hexavalent chrome annually by application, in kilograms of metal content.