

Vinyl Council of Australia
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Housing Affordability and Sustainability: Getting the right mix

PVC products make a valuable contribution to housing affordability, according to a study by BIS Shrapnel.

Cost of Building a 'Typical Home': The Impact of Using PVC and alternative construction materials in house construction, commissioned by the Vinyl Council of Australia, examined the additional cost of building a 'typical Australian home' with and without using PVC products.

The study found that actively replacing commonly used PVC applications in a typical new house can add as much as \$13,750 to the total cost.

Ross Trewartha, BIS Shrapnel Senior Project Manager responsible for building materials research, explained that alternatives to PVC in most applications are more expensive, and in many cases, more difficult to use.

"Housing affordability is an issue all around Australia. Using PVC products where they apply makes it more affordable."

The study found that home-owners faced significantly higher building costs if they avoided PVC usage in building, adding between 2% and 3% in costs for alternatives to the most commonly used PVC building products, and between 5.4% and 8.0% compared to a house using PVC products in all possible applications.

PVC is the market leader for DWV (drain, waste, vent), sewerage and storm water pipe, as well as for electrical conduit and cabling. It is also used for potable water pipe, guttering and downpipes, floor coverings, window frames and external cladding.

Vinyl Council of Australia Chief Executive, Sophi MacMillan said some builders and home-owners are being advised to use alternatives to PVC, without evidence to show the other products are better for the building, the environment or the hip-pocket.

"This study shows Australians are unnecessarily paying more for these decisions – money that could be spent on specific, proven environmental initiatives such as water recycling, better glazing or solar hot water".

Ms MacMillan said choosing PVC products can help improve housing affordability, and is often favourable from an environmental standpoint.

"PVC products are usually very durable, recyclable, need less maintenance than alternatives, and provide specific advantages such as thermal efficiency and lower embodied energy.

"Making the right choice about building materials means many home-owners and builders can afford to make their houses more sustainable".

The BIS Shrapnel study looked at three typical homes, a single story home of 210 sq M, and two double story homes of 290 sq M and 350 sq M.

Data was obtained from publicly available information on the cost of the various PVC and alternative products typically used in house construction, as well as interviews with buildings, plumbers, contractors and architects.

Pic Caption: Using PVC building materials increases housing affordability.

ATTACH: STUDY