

plumbing maintenance

Background

This info sheet relates to **Building Format Plans BFP** (formerly known as Building Unit Plans BUP) – This style of plan is a subdivision of a building but may also include a private courtyard.

Building Format Plan refer bottom right corner of the Survey Plan	Building Unit Plan (old name) refer each page of the Building Unit Plan
	

Slightly different outcomes happen for **Standard Format Plans SFP** (formerly known as Group Title Plans GTP).

Why is the type of plan important?

The Section 49C of Land Title Act 1994 defines the boundary of lot as being: -

“... the boundary of a lot created under the plan, and separated from another lot or common property by a floor, wall or ceiling, must be located at the centre of the floor, wall or ceiling.”

The lot is really just a “box”. So common property includes the following: -

- Under the slab (below the “box”)
- Above the ceiling ie the roof cavity and roof (above the “box”)
- Outside the walls (outside the “box”)

However, we also need to remember that sometimes lots are not divided by a wall. For example, an outside balcony may form part of the lot and the boundary is simply an invisible plane at the edge of the balcony.

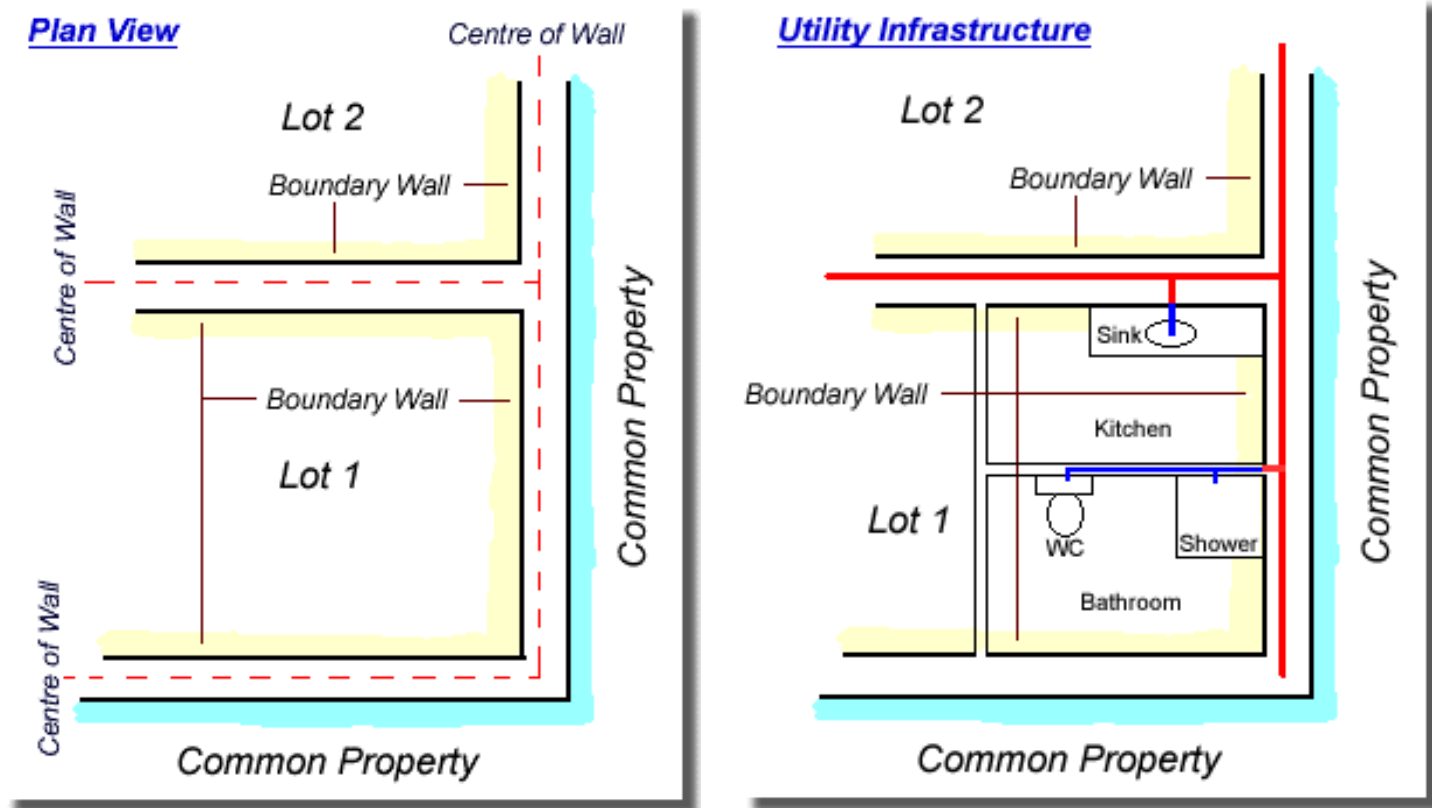
Utility Services

The Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997 defines utility service as follows: -

utility service means— (a) water reticulation or supply; or (b) gas reticulation or supply; or (c) electricity supply; or (d) air conditioning; or (e) a telephone service; or (f) a computer data or television service; or (g) a sewer system; or (h) drainage; or (i) a system for the removal or disposal of garbage or waste; or (j) another system or service designed to improve the amenity, or enhance the enjoyment, of lots or common property.

However, Section of 159(3) of the Body Corporate and Community Management (Standard Module) Regulation 2008 effectively excludes utility infrastructure that services only one lot that provides a domestic utility service. For example, hot-water systems, washing machines, clothes dryers, air-conditioners etc

Water pipes



The body corporate

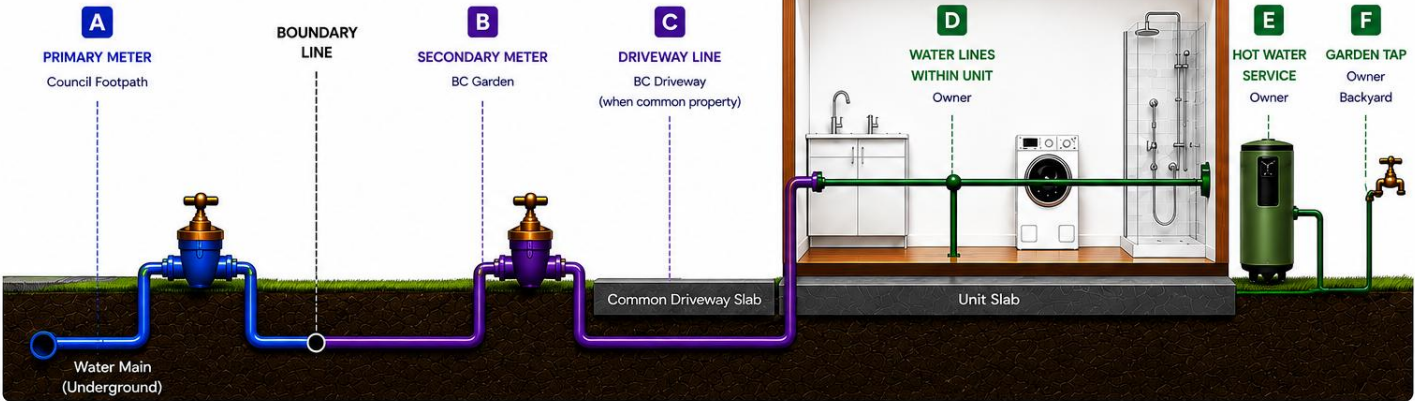
- ☐ The cold-water pipes or cables shown in **red** on the utility infrastructure plan above, as they are located within a boundary structure.

The lot owner

- ☐ The cold-water pipes or cables shown in **blue** on the utility infrastructure plan above, as they service Lot 1 only, and are located within an internal wall and not a boundary structure.
- ☐ A hot-water system, including the associated pipes and wiring, supplying the service solely to the lot, whether or not the system is located on common property.
- ☐ Bathroom sink, toilet and shower (including shower combination).

Let's Take Things All the way from the Street

Who is responsible for what?



COUNCIL A Primary Meter (Main Meter) and Council Control Tap	BODY CORPORATE B Secondary Meter (measures usage) ¹ C Line under driveway to half way through wall ²	OWNER D Water lines within the unit E Hot water service F Garden tap (servicing the lot) ³
A PRIMARY METER The primary meter (main meter) and council control tap are the responsibility of Council. This is infrastructure that supplies water to the scheme.	B SECONDARY METER The secondary meter only measures usage. Responsibility sits with the body corporate. Ref: Timbertops Indooroopilly [2007] QBCCMCmr 76 (13 February 2007)	C DRIVEWAY LINE This applies only if the driveway is common property. If the plan is a Standard Format Plan and the driveway forms part of a lot, responsibility changes.
D WATER LINES WITHIN UNIT All water lines inside the unit, including to fixtures and appliances, are the owner's responsibility.	E HOT WATER SERVICE Hot water systems are excluded from body corporate responsibility. They are the owner's responsibility under s159(3)(b)(ii).	F GARDEN TAP A garden tap servicing a lot is for the owner's use. It is not maintained by the body corporate under s159(3)(b)(ii).

Please Note: Responsibilities may vary. Please check with your Council or Body Corporate for specific advice.

Sewer and drainage systems

Let's Take Things Inside the Unit

Who is responsible for what?



Please Note: Responsibilities may vary. Please check with your Council or Body Corporate for specific advice.

So generally, the body corporate is responsible for the sewer pipes as they leave the unit. This changes if the occupier deposits something into the toilet that is not intended to be put down the sewer that blocks the drains below the toilet eg a nappy.

Normal use can still result in a blockage that cannot be attributed to the occupant.
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Common reasons for sewer blockages (not the responsibility of the occupier)

The Plumbing Code of Australia defines the minimum fall of sewer pipes: -

- 1.65% fall (1:60) minimum fall – below this the sewer is more prone to blockage – due to lack of fall
- 2.00% best practice fall
- 5.00% too steep – above this the sewer is more prone to blockage – the water gets away without taking the solids

Lack of fall is a large problem but this is made worse by changes to toilets over the years to make them “water wise”.

- 9 litre flush - old style toilet 20+ years ago
- 6 litre flush – toilets from 10+ years ago
- 4.5 litre flush – modern toilets using a full flush
- 2 litre flush – modern toilets using a half flush

As the volume of water decreases the likelihood of blockage increases. This is made worse if a section of sewer line receives little or no other water flow other than one or two toilet flushes a day. Also, calcium build-up happens more if urine is not sufficiently diluted with water.

It is generally impossible to change the fall of sewer pipes without significant inconvenience and cost. A simple (but not fail-safe solution) is ... **DOUBLE FULL FLUSH ONLY!** Yes, this solution uses more water but the trade-off is less blockages.

Another common reason for blockage is tree root invasion.

Do NOT Flush These Items Down your Toilet (or you will be responsible for fixing the blockage)

1. BABY WIPES

This is important. Even if they say they are flushable, never flush baby wipes. These are frequently the cause of clogs and should always be thrown out in a wastebasket instead. Even "flushable" wipes don't disintegrate the way toilet paper does, which can eventually cause plumbing issues.

2. Q-TIPS, COTTON PADS OR OTHER COTTON PRODUCTS

Cotton balls, cotton pads, and Q-Tips are definitely not safe to flush — they don't break down the way toilet paper does, and all they really do is clump together in your pipes and cause problems down the line.

3. MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

This one might shock you, but menstrual products (tampons, pads, etc.) should also never be flushed down the toilet. Why? These products are meant to **absorb** water, not break down in it, meaning they'll only expand when you flush them — and that's definitely not good for your plumbing.

4. CONDOMS

Condoms are also not designed to break down in the water, so flushing them can cause clogs in toilets and septic tanks.

5. BABY NAPPIES

Just like menstrual products, nappies are meant to absorb water. Nappies don't break down in water and can lead to costly damages to your system. Dispose of all nappies in the general refuse bin.

6. DENTAL FLOSS

In addition to clogging your pipes, flushing dental floss can actually cause environmental damage. When floss is flushed, floss basically turns into a net, catching and holding onto other debris — it can even wrap around parts of your septic system and burn out the motor.

7. PAPER TOWELS & TISSUES

You might think paper towels and tissues aren't all that different from toilet paper, but they're simply not designed to break down the way toilet paper does. In the event that you need to use paper towels or tissues in place of toilet paper, dispose of them in a waste basket.

8. MEDICATION

If you have old pills that you need to get rid of, don't flush the pills — toilet water doesn't break them down properly, meaning the medication gets into the water and can cause toxic environmental effects.

9. CIGARETTE BUTTS

In addition to causing clogs, cigarette butts are made of toxic chemicals, and that's exactly what flushing cigarettes down the drain adds to the water.

10. CAT LITTER

Some brands of cat litter claim to be flushable, however, most toilets don't use enough water to move the litter along properly in your pipes. Even if the brand claims it's flushable, don't flush cat litter down the toilet. All it does is add more things to the water that make it harder to purify. Cat waste from the litter box should also not be flushed, because the litter dehydrates the waste and toilets are meant to flush water-soluble waste.

11. HAIR

Similar to dental floss, hair forms a sort of net when you flush it down the drain and gets caught in your pipes. Additionally, hair never dissolves so it creates more risk for clogging your system.

12. GUM

Flushing gum down the toilet is a big mistake, as it's sticky and insoluble. Being sticky, this leads to increased risk of clogging your pipes. Since it's insoluble, gum will never disintegrate causing major risk for potential issues to your system down the line.

13. COOKING GREASE

Just like you shouldn't put cooking grease down the drain, you should never flush grease. When grease cools, it congeals which makes it thicker and leads to risk in clogging your pipes.

14. FISH

Although you've probably heard of people flushing their pet fish, this actually isn't a good idea. Fish don't break down in water, which leads to increased risk of creating a clog. Rather than flushing your deceased fish, consider a proper burial.

15. FOOD

This might surprise you because human waste is basically just broken-down food anyway, but flushing food that hasn't been digested can cause problems for your plumbing, too. While it's biodegradable and will break down eventually, it can cause clogs until that happens.

16. BLEACH

This may be the most surprising item as all, as you're probably used to cleaning with bleach. Bleach is actually way too harsh of a chemical for your toilet and septic system. Rather than focusing on cleaning stains with bleach, you may want to consider using vinegar instead.

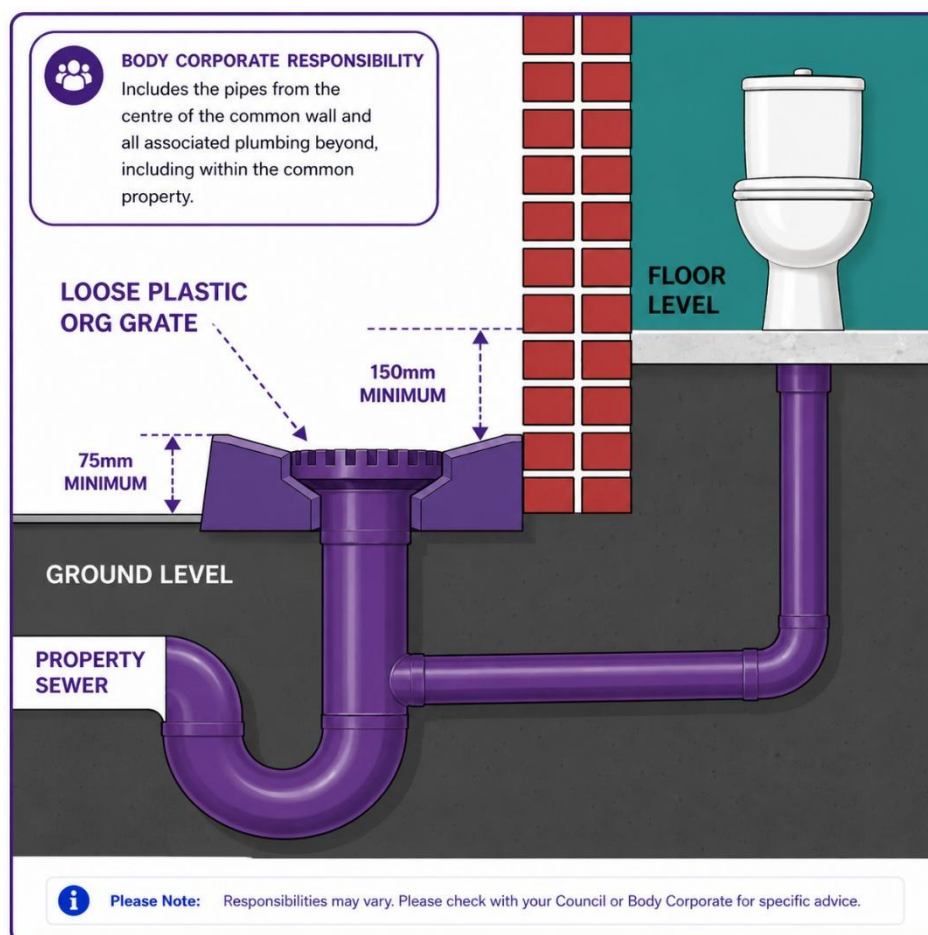
Overflow Relief Gully (ORG)

Some residential units have an Overflow Relief Gully (ORG). If your sewer blocks, an ORG will release any sewage overflow to the outside garden, keeping it away from the inside of your home. An ORG is a drain-like fitting outside your home. It's lower than the other waste outlets in your house and has a vent-like top that pops off in an emergency. Older style homes are more likely to have 'disconnecter gullies or vents' that look like ORGs but will not pop open in an overflow. Often these can be converted.

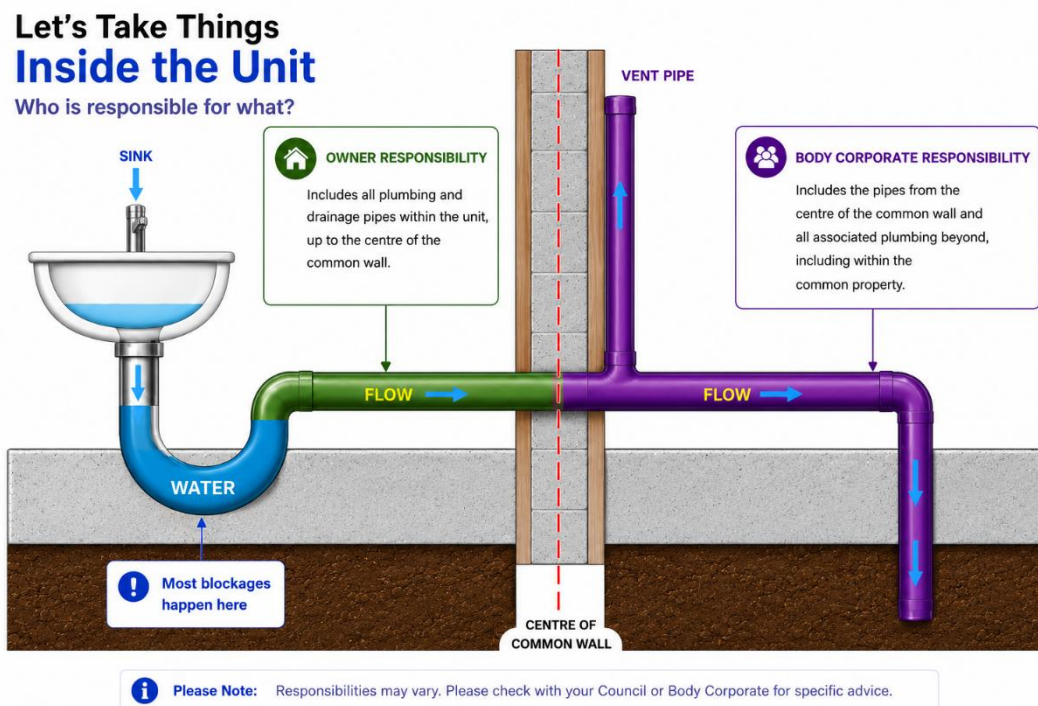
It's important to have a current model that doesn't have to be opened manually and will pop out completely in the event of a spill, so that the sewage can escape unhindered.

To operate properly, the ORG must be lower than the other waste outlets in your home; including the toilet, all sinks, baths and showers. That way, if sewage backs up it will reach the ORG first and spill from there. In addition, the ORG should be 75mm above the surrounding ground to ensure stormwater can't flow directly into it. Make sure landscaping, garden beds and paving are not raised to the same height as the ORG. If the ORG is covered, sewage will not be able to escape during a spill. Keep pot plants and other items off the vent. Make sure any landscaping or garden beds do not cover the ORG or obstruct the path of the sewage in the event of an overflow.

Keep an eye on your ORG to ensure it hasn't become blocked or obstructed and correct any corrosion or silt build up that will prevent the top popping open. Ensure the drainage path is kept clear so that any spill can drain away quickly and not build up around the ORG itself.



Sinks

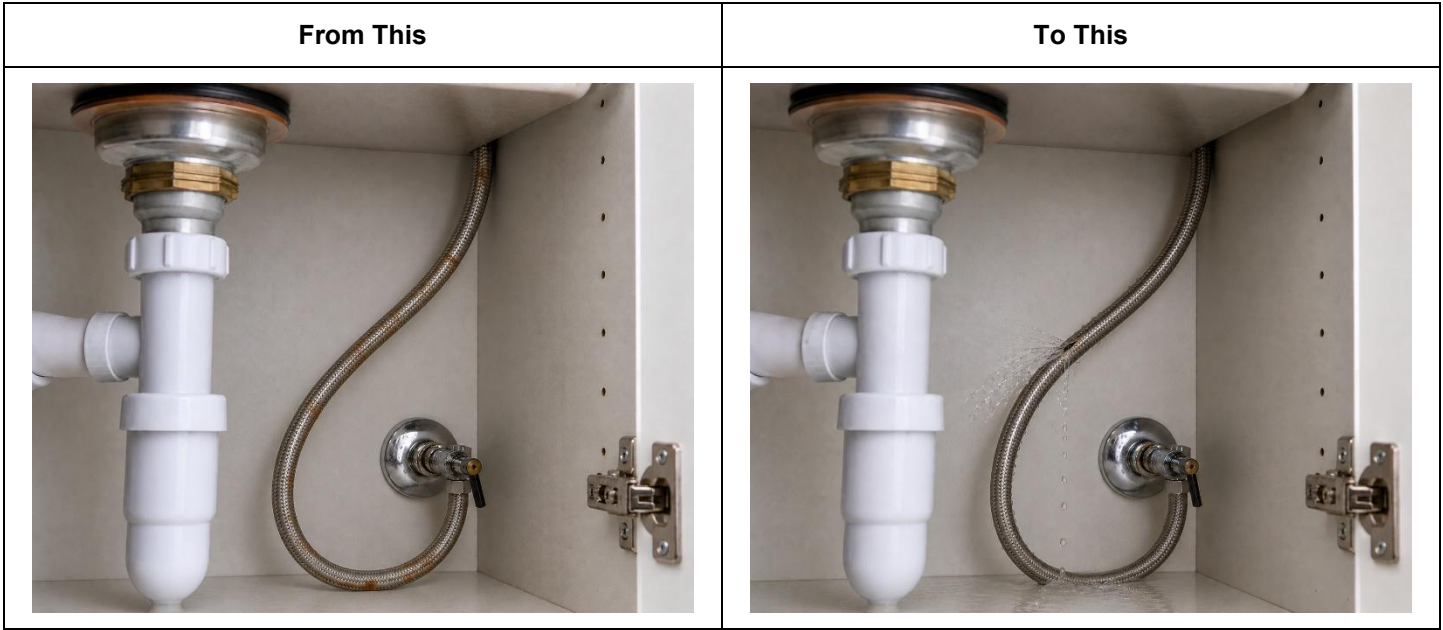


In a similar way to toilets, as the waste pipe leaves the unit responsibility changes. However, cleaning any hair trap remains the responsibility of the owner or occupant.

Other Common Plumbing Items that are the responsibility of the owner

- Shower trays, shower units, shower screens and hair traps – owner
- Shower combinations – owner
- Water proofing floors including showers – owner
- Bathroom tiles – owner
- Taps and Fittings – owner
- Sinks – owner
- Toilets – owner

Flexi Hoses ... all owners should be regularly checking and replacing (at their cost)



Flexible water hoses (flexi hoses) should be visually inspected every **6 months** and replaced every **5 to 10 years** (with many insurance providers and plumbers strongly recommending a strict **5-year replacement** limit) to prevent catastrophic internal flooding.

Inspection Schedule

- **Every 6 months:** Shine a torch under sinks, basins, and behind toilets. Look closely at the stainless-steel braiding and connection points.
- **Check for expiry tags:** Many modern hoses feature a coloured tag indicating a manufacture or replacement date. If there is no tag and you do not know the age, treat them as high-risk and have them assessed.

Warning Signs to Replace Immediately

- **Rust or corrosion:** Any brown spots or calcification on the metal mesh.
- **Fraying or kinks:** Broken metal fibres, twisted sections, or sharp bends.
- **Bulging:** Swelling or ballooning along the rubber/PEX core inside the braid.
- **Dampness:** Water droplets, pooling, or musty smells near the fittings.

Best Practices for Safety

- **Hire a professional:** Always use a licensed plumber to install or replace flexi hoses to ensure they comply with local standards and to protect your home insurance validity.
- **Install isolation valves:** Ensure mini-stop valves are fitted so you can shut off the water to a specific fixture without turning off your property's main water supply.
- **Turn off mains when away:** If you go on holidays, turn your main water supply off.