



AEPMA Code of Conduct and Dispute Resolution Framework

Introduction

The Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association (AEPMA) is the authoritative body for consumers and professionals regarding pest management in Australia. Over 80% of pest control activities in Australia are performed by AEPMA members. This membership offers significant advantages to companies and assures consumers of their professionalism and reliability.

In collaboration with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), state fair-trading departments, and insurance companies, AEPMA has developed a robust, cost-effective dispute resolution system for the pest management sector. This system ensures that while legal entitlements remain intact, disputes are handled efficiently and transparently, benefitting all involved parties.

This Code of Conduct establishes the ethical and operational standards that all AEPMA members commit to, reinforcing our dedication to service excellence, environmental responsibility, and customer satisfaction.

The AEPMA Code of Conduct and Dispute Resolution Framework applies to all AEPMA Codes of Practice

- AEPMA's Industry Code of Best Practice for Termite Management
- AEPMA's Industry Code of Best Practice for Termite Management During Construction
- A Code of Practice for the Control of Bed Bug Infestations in Australia
- A Code of Practice for Pest Management in the Food Industry
- A Code of Practice for Prior to Purchase Timber Pest Inspections
- A Code of Practice for Rodent Management

Ethical Principles

AEPMA members must adhere to the following ethical principles:

1. **Integrity and Transparency:** Members are expected to conduct all business transactions with integrity and full transparency.
2. **Quality of Service:** Members are committed to delivering services that meet or exceed industry standards, ensuring safety and customer satisfaction.

3. **Environmental Responsibility:** Members must use practices and products that reduce environmental impact while promoting public health.
4. **Respect for the Law:** All relevant local, state, and national regulations regarding pest management must be followed.
5. **Commitment to Improvement:** Members must commit to continuous professional development, staying updated with industry advancements.

Member Responsibilities

In addition to following ethical guidelines, members are expected to:

1. **Customer Engagement:** Engage respectfully with customers, providing clear, accurate, and timely information.
2. **Documentation and Record Keeping:** Maintain thorough records of pest management activities, from assessment to treatment.
3. **Conflict of Interest:** Disclose any conflicts of interest and refrain from exploiting them for personal gain.
4. **Professional Conduct:** Act in a way that upholds the reputation of the pest management profession.
5. **Dispute Prevention and Early Resolution**

To prevent disputes, AEPMA offers resources and training focused on dispute avoidance and resolution strategies, such as client communication and expectation management.

Early Intervention Program

AEPMA provides an Early Intervention Program that allows members to seek advice before a dispute escalates. This program focuses on identifying issues early and resolving them amicably.

Formal Complaint Lodgement

Complaint Submission

Complaints must be submitted in writing, outlining the nature of the dispute, involved parties, and supporting evidence. AEPMA will provide resources, such as templates and checklists, to ensure that submissions are comprehensive.

Acknowledgment and Review

Complaints will be acknowledged within three business days. A preliminary review will then be conducted to determine the complaint's validity and scope. Both parties will be informed of the findings, ensuring transparency.

Mediation and Negotiation

Mediation Session

Before a full investigation, both parties will be encouraged to participate in a mediation session with an AEPMA-approved mediator. To streamline the process, the mediation direction will be set by a 3-member group: the Executive Director (ED), the President, and the relevant State Chairperson for the complaint. However, only the ED will actively participate in the mediation to maintain efficiency and reduce potential conflicts. This structure ensures swift resolution while minimising complexity and avoiding delays caused by involving too many stakeholders.

Session Outcome

If the mediation is successful, a settlement agreement will be drafted. If unsuccessful, the matter proceeds to a formal investigation.

Formal Investigation

Investigation Committee

An independent Investigation Committee, with no conflicts of interest, will be formed to conduct a thorough investigation. The investigation will include interviews, reviews of documents, and consultations with experts if necessary.

Investigation Report

Upon completion, the committee will present a report outlining its findings and recommendations. This report will be shared with all involved parties to ensure transparency.

Resolution and Monitoring

Resolution Decision

AEPMA's Disciplinary Committee will review the investigation report and make a final resolution. This decision, including any corrective actions or sanctions, will be communicated to both parties.

Implementation Monitoring

AEPMA will monitor the implementation of the resolution. If any party fails to comply, further sanctions may be applied. Non-compliance will also be reported to relevant authorities when appropriate.

Appeals Process

Grounds for Appeal

An appeal can be submitted based on new evidence, procedural errors, or an argument of disproportionate sanctions. The appeal must be submitted within 30 days of the resolution decision.

Appeal Review Panel

An independent panel will review the appeal. This panel will be composed of members who were not involved in the original investigation.

Appeal Hearing

During the appeal hearing, both parties may present their case, and any new evidence will be reviewed. This ensures a fair and transparent forum for reconsideration.

Decision on Appeal

The panel will deliberate and communicate its decision in writing to both parties. This decision is final within AEPMA's dispute resolution process.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

AEPMA will maintain comprehensive records of the entire dispute resolution process, ensuring confidentiality except where required by law or necessary to implement the resolution.

Periodic Review of the Dispute Resolution Process

AEPMA commits to regularly reviewing the dispute resolution process to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Feedback from external parties and consumer representatives will be included in this review to enhance fairness and transparency.

"All communications, correspondence, and negotiations carried out under AEPMA's Dispute Resolution Framework are conducted on a 'without prejudice' basis. This ensures that any statements made, or documents shared, during the dispute resolution process cannot be used as evidence in any subsequent legal proceedings, except where required by law or with the explicit consent of all parties involved."