

Comment – Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association

Comment

AEPMA welcomes the QPC's focus on reforming licensing and regulatory practices and urges the Commission to adopt a more assertive position. Our submission highlights the disproportionate regulatory burden faced by pest managers, the need for alignment with national frameworks, and serious concerns around consumer protection in the use of unverified building products. We believe these reforms are essential to restoring productivity and trust across the construction sector.



Submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission

Re: Interim Report – Opportunities to Improve Productivity of the Construction Industry

Submitted by: Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association (AEPMA)

Introduction

The Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association (AEPMA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Queensland Productivity Commission's (QPC) Interim Report. We appreciate that our earlier submission has been acknowledged in the discussion around occupational licensing. The pest management industry provides critical services that protect public health, food safety, and the structural integrity of homes and infrastructure. However, the current regulatory framework in Queensland remains unnecessarily complex, inconsistent with national practice, and ill-suited to a modern workforce or risk-based model of regulation.

Recommendation 8: Licensing Reform and QBCC Scope

The Commission notes stakeholder concern regarding the complexity and cost of occupational licensing, including reference to pest controllers who must maintain a QBCC licence even when their work has no connection to construction activity.

AEPMA's earlier submission clearly articulated the following:

- Dual licensing (under both Queensland Health and the QBCC) imposes disproportionate costs and administrative burden;
- The QBCC licence offers no additional public safety benefit for pest controllers not engaged in pre-construction work;
- No other state or territory imposes such a dual-licensing structure on pest managers.

The pest management industry is already licensed by Queensland Health under the Pest Management Act 2001. Professionals in the industry are licensed as Pest Management Technicians (PMTs), a term formally endorsed by the Environmental Health Forum—comprising Commonwealth, State and Territory Health Ministers—in 1998. When undertaking chemical application, a technician must hold an endorsement for Pest Control Activities, but the work undertaken by pest management professionals goes well beyond just chemical use. The scope includes inspection, monitoring, prevention, and

advice—none of which require additional regulatory oversight from a building and construction regulator.

Given the scale of the QBCC—more than \$1 billion in assets, turnover of nearly \$400 million, and responsibility for over 118,000 licensees—there must be a clearer justification for its expansive regulatory remit. What measurable benefit is delivered by extending this regime to low-risk, non-construction specialist trades?

The QBCC's broad responsibilities, as outlined in its 2023–24 Annual Report, now extend well beyond construction oversight, covering initiatives ranging from mediation services and identity fraud prevention to LGBTQIA+ staff networks and Indigenous reconciliation planning. While these may represent important internal commitments, they indicate a regulator operating outside the core purpose of licensing and regulating construction-related work.

The pest management sector contributes over \$1.5 billion to the national economy and employs more than 10,000 professionals. It is not appropriate for this sector to be encumbered by regulatory overreach. AEPMA reaffirms its recommendation that non-pre-construction pest management be removed from the QBCC's licensing jurisdiction and consolidated under Queensland Health. This would immediately reduce regulatory duplication, streamline compliance, and align Queensland with other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 11: Skilled Migration Pathways

The interim report correctly identifies skilled migration as a lever to address workforce shortages but stops short of advocating for policy updates based on emerging occupational classifications.

Since the interim report was released, Pest Management Technicians have been formally recognised under the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA 2024). This corrects the long-standing misclassification under ANZSCO, where pest control was grouped with general labourers. The OSCA 2024 reclassification demands policy alignment.

AEPMA reiterates its call for:

- Pest control to be included under Trades classifications for skilled migration;
- The pest management sector to be formally recognised as experiencing a skilled labour shortage;
- Visa and migration pathways to be updated to reflect OSCA 2024;
- The public health significance of pest control—particularly in aged care, healthcare, food manufacturing, and childcare—must be acknowledged in migration policy.

Broader Comments on Licensing, Regulation and QBCC Governance

The QPC identifies a 9% decline in productivity in Queensland's construction sector since 2018 and highlights the burden of regulatory inefficiency. However, its recommendations must go further in diagnosing and addressing the structural causes of this drag.

QBCC's Model is an Outlier

- No other Australian jurisdiction operates a construction regulator with the scope and breadth of the QBCC.
- Its regulatory reach into non-construction occupations such as pest control lacks justification.

Core Functions Can Be Delivered Elsewhere

- Builder insolvency insurance and dispute resolution could be more efficiently administered via statutory schemes or administrative tribunals.
- Licensing of health-regulated activities such as pest control is more appropriately managed by Queensland Health.

AEPMA's PestCert as a Self-Regulatory Model

- PestCert, AEPMA's accreditation program, provides assurance of professional standards in training, compliance, and ethical practice.
- PestCert offers a streamlined, industry-led alternative to duplicative government regulation.

Comment on Box 14.2 – Modern Methods of Construction

While AEPMA recognises that accepting manufacturers' certificates as evidence of compliance may simplify construction processes, this approach raises serious concerns about consumer protection. Any move towards self-certification must be accompanied by appropriate safeguards. Specifically:

- Is there a manufacturer's guarantee attached to the product or system?
- Does the manufacturer have the financial capacity to honour that guarantee?
- Has the product or method been independently verified as compliant with the National Construction Code (NCC) and relevant Australian Standards?

Recent industry experience highlights the risk of false or misleading product claims. A termite barrier system was recently marketed to builders and pest professionals, yet its performance claims were unsubstantiated and lacked scientific evidence. The product failed to meet the assessment criteria under AS 3660.3:2014 and did not hold ABCB CodeMark® certification. Despite this, misleading reports were circulated suggesting compliance, some of which were based on outdated or withdrawn documentation.

The attached "Builders Be Aware" alert, issued by AEPMA, underscores the risks of relying on unverified claims. Pest professionals and certifiers must perform rigorous due diligence before endorsing any product. Without independent third-party certification, like that provided under the ABCB CodeMark® scheme, there is little to protect builders or consumers from defective or non-compliant systems.

AEPMA strongly supports retaining the Australian Building Codes Board's ability to disallow any material or methodology that lacks scientific validation. The integrity of the built environment—and consumer protection—must not be compromised in the name of administrative simplicity.



BUILDERS BE AWARE

Builders and Certifiers need to be aware that not all systems promoted for the protection of New Buildings from termite attack are fit for purpose. As an industry body, AEPMA recommends that builders always look for the security provided from using **ABCB CodeMark® Certified systems**.

As an Association, AEPMA has acted against some types of products through varied communications with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB), State building regulators and others.

The Use of Boron Compounds for Buildings Under Construction

Concern is expressed with claims made for some boron compounds. Builders and certifiers should look very closely at the supporting documentation provided with boron compounds before considering their use.

Boron products are applied by spray, brush, or roller onto the base of exposed raw timber perimeter wall frames; and within 20-hours, to the edges of freshly poured raw concrete slabs. The boron is claimed to penetrate up to 80 mm into the surfaces to which it is applied. We have not seen any NCC (BCA) perceived evidence of suitability and no technical data to support these claims or the warranties offered.

Where warranties are offered for any termite protection system, builders should satisfy themselves of the ability of the company to make payment should an expensive claim be made.

It is also noted that the registered labels for boron compounds fail to provide approval for some of the uses being claimed for termite protection of new dwellings in accord with the NCC.

Boron products are registered as timber preservatives, providing protection against fungal and insect attack. Current registrations do not provide for these compounds to be used to provide termite management to buildings under construction in accord with the *Australian Standard AS3660:2014 Termite management, Part 1: Protection of New Building Work*.

The use of boron compounds is not compliant with Section 7 of the above Australian Standard. This Standard includes methods to deter concealed entry by termites from the soil to the building above the inspection zone.

No boron products have shown evidence of suitability for new building work in accord with *AS 3660:2014 Termite management, Part 3: Assessment criteria for termite management systems*.

No boron compounds have been certified by independent audit under the ABCB CodeMark® Scheme.

We have also observed the use of support materials for boron treatments that rely on a **now withdrawn** 2020 Performance Solution Report, as their primary evidence of suitability.



The author of another report relied upon, has advised that his report advised the boron product reviewed was NOT compliant for use in the protection of new buildings, yet his report is being 'quoted' as confirming its suitability!

For this reason, Professional Pest Managers, Builders and Certifiers must ensure they study all 'expert opinion' reports very carefully. Before relying on *any* independent report, we strongly recommend that you contact the author(s) of the report, to ensure the report remains current. Also check the credentials of the author to ensure they are an expert.

You MUST also get a copy of, and read, EVERY report that is referenced; and contact the authors of those reports too! And be especially diligent if the product is only supported by an expert opinion provided by the marketer of the product or system.

Be Aware... If you get it wrong, and termites attack the property. It could prove very costly!

Termites and Termite Damage

Termites can literally destroy a new home in a few months, and it is going to be the Professional Pest Manager, Builder and/or Certifier who will be held responsible for repairing such damage, if it occurs within the builder's statutory defect liability period.

With some products in the market making false and misleading claims it is imperative that professionals perform due diligence and check the validity of all claims being made for a product, unless of course the product is supported by an ABCB CodeMark Certificate.

When a product is CodeMark Certified, it means that all the product technical data has been independently reviewed and audited, through the ABCB scheme, so you can be certain of its compliance with the NCC (BCA).

Conclusion

We believe that the use of boron compounds for the protection of new building work is likely to be considered as misleading homeowners who rely upon it to protect their valued property. When a termite infestation occurs, who will the homeowner turn to, to address their expectations and their financial costs?