



Plain Language Summary of the AARPN Complaints Policy – Complaint about CPN Practitioner

The **Australasian Association and Register of Practicing Nutritionists (AARPN)** is committed to maintaining high professional standards in the field of nutrition. This **Complaints Policy** outlines how complaints are handled, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability. The policy applies to **Certified Practicing Nutritionists (CPNs)** and AARPN itself as a professional body.

1. Purpose of the Complaints Policy

The **purpose** of this policy is to:

- Ensure all complaints about **professional conduct, ethics, and fitness to practice** are handled fairly and efficiently.
- Provide a **clear process** for members of the public, clients, or other professionals to raise concerns.
- **Maintain trust** in the profession and uphold high ethical and professional standards.
- Offer **early resolution** where possible and ensure serious breaches are properly investigated.

This policy applies to complaints about:

1. Alleged breaches of the **AARPN Code of Conduct** and **Professional Standards**.
2. Concerns about the **fitness to practice** of an AARPN Certified Practicing Nutritionist (CPN).
3. Complaints against **AARPN as an organization** or its committees.

AARPN may **dismiss complaints that are out of scope, vexatious, or frivolous** and will refer matters to **Health Complaints Commissioners (HCCs)** or **law enforcement** where required.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

AARPN Administration

- **Receives complaints** and assigns a reference number.
- **Ensures timelines** are met and refers complaints to the appropriate committee.

Chair of the Ethics & Complaints Committee

- **Reviews complaints** and decides the initial course of action.

- Determines if the complaint should go to **mediation, conciliation, or investigation**.
- Ensures **fairness and transparency** in decision-making.
- Oversees mediation, if applicable, to resolve disputes quickly.

Ethics & Complaints Committee

- Conducts **formal investigations** into complaints.
- Reviews evidence, holds hearings, and determines **if a breach has occurred**.
- Decides on **appropriate sanctions** if a complaint is substantiated.
- Ensures **procedural fairness** and compliance with AARPN's standards.

AARPN Board

- Provides **oversight** of the complaints process to ensure fairness.
- **Confirms or implements sanctions** determined by the Ethics & Complaints Committee.
- Handles **appeals** to ensure a fair and impartial review.
- **Monitors and improves** the complaints process over time.

3. Step-by-Step Complaints Process

Step 1: Complaint Submission (Formal Documentation)

- Complaints must be submitted **via email or post** using a standard form or freeform letter.
- AARPN assigns a **unique complaint reference number** and refers it to the **Ethics & Complaints Committee**.

Step 2: Preliminary Assessment

- The **Ethics & Complaints Committee** reviews whether the complaint is **valid and within scope**.
- Complaints may be:
 - **Dismissed** (if vexatious or out of scope).
 - **Referred externally** (e.g., HCC or police if necessary).
 - **Considered for mediation or conciliation**.
- If mediation is unsuccessful or inappropriate, the complaint proceeds to an investigation.

Step 3: Opportunity for Reply (21–28 Days)

- The **respondent (practitioner)** is informed of the allegations.
- They are given **21–28 days** to submit evidence, supporting documents, or witness statements.

Step 4: Mediation & Conciliation (If Applicable)

- The **Chair of the Ethics & Complaints Committee** may decide if mediation is suitable.
- If mediation resolves the complaint, the process ends.
- If mediation fails, the case moves to investigation.

Step 5: Formal Investigation (4-6 Weeks)

- An **Investigation Officer** (CPN with at least 5 years of experience) gathers evidence.
- The complainant and respondent receive updates **every 4–6 weeks**.

Step 6: Hearing & Review

- The **Ethics & Complaints Committee** or a special **Hearing Panel** reviews the investigation report.
- The respondent may present a **verbal defense, call witnesses, or clarify evidence**.

Step 7: Decision & Sanctions (If Applicable)

- The **Ethics & Complaints Committee** determines if a breach occurred:
 - **No breach:** The complaint is dismissed.
 - **Breach found:** The committee imposes **sanctions** proportionate to the severity.

Possible Sanctions:

- **Formal Warning**
- **Further Education (CPD requirements)**
- **Supervision (e.g., practice under an approved mentor)**
- **Suspension or Termination of Membership**

Step 8: Notifications & Right to Appeal

- Both the complainant and respondent are **notified in writing** of the decision.
- Appeals must be lodged **within 14–28 days** if there is a **procedural error or new evidence**.

Step 9: Appeals Process (4-6 Weeks)

- The **Appeals Panel (independent from the original case)** reviews the appeal.
- **Possible Appeal Outcomes:**
 - **Original decision upheld** (no change).
 - **Sanction modified** (adjusted but not removed).
 - **Decision overturned** (case dismissed).
 - **Case reopened for further investigation**.
- The **final decision is binding**, and no further appeals are allowed.

4. Handling Special Cases

- **Health Fund Fraud Cases:** AARPN reports fraudulent claims to health funds, which may result in loss of provider status.
 - **Criminal or Civil Proceedings:** If a complaint involves criminal misconduct, AARPN may pause its investigation until external proceedings conclude.
 - **Complaints about Students:** If a complaint involves a **student member**, AARPN may refer the issue to the relevant educational institution.
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5. Transparency & Continuous Improvement

- **Public Reporting:** Suspensions and terminations may be publicly listed on the AARPN website.
 - **Annual Complaints Review:** AARPN collects data to improve its processes and ensure public trust.
 - **Policy Updates:** The AARPN Board reviews this policy **annually** to incorporate feedback and align with legal changes.
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Conclusion

This **Complaints Policy** ensures that all concerns are handled **fairly, efficiently, and transparently**. AARPN is committed to upholding high ethical standards while **protecting public trust** in the profession. If you need to make a complaint, please refer to the full policy or contact AARPN for assistance.

Contact Details: Email: admin@aarpn.com Website: www.aarpn.com