

POLICY

CORPORATE SERVICES

GOVERNANCE & CORPORATE PLANNING



COUNCILLOR EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT POLICY >>

1. POLICY STATEMENT >>

To provide the Mayor and Councillors with reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their roles.

2. PRINCIPLES >>

This Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Policy complies with the Statement of Principles, set out in the Department of Local Government guidelines:

- **No private benefit to be derived**
Facilities provided to Councillors are for the sole use of Councillors in undertaking their duties and must be used responsibly and appropriately.
- **Reasonable Expenses Reimbursement**
Councillors should not be financially disadvantaged when carrying out their roles, and should be fairly and reasonably compensated in accordance with community expectations.
- **Public accountability and transparency**
The use of the provided facilities will be open for review to the extent appropriate to the proper performance of a Councillor's responsibilities.
- **Public perceptions and community expectations**
The Council will provide only those facilities reasonably necessary for the efficient performance of a Councillor's responsibilities.
- **Equity and Participation**
To maximise equity and the participation of Councillors from diverse backgrounds and circumstances, this Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Policy expressly permits the reimbursement of expenses that are necessarily incurred to allow the participation of Councillors who experience unusual barriers to participation, such as a disability or cultural responsibilities.

3. SCOPE >>

This policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by them in undertaking their roles.

4. RESPONSIBILITY >>

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring this policy is understood and adhered to by the Mayor and Councillors.

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5. DEFINITIONS >>

Council business - This is official business of a Councillor as generally described in Part 2, Divisions 1 and 2 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, conducted on behalf of, and approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business continuity for the Council. Council business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local government area.

*** Participating in a community group event or being a representative on a board not associated with Council is not regarded as Council business.*

Reasonable - Councillors must make sound judgements and consider what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to their communities when determining reasonable levels of expenditure.

Expenses - Council will reimburse Councillors for their reasonable and necessary expenses incurred or to be incurred when discharging their duties as Councillors.

Professional Development - Attendance at workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improve Councillors' skills relevant to the role of councillor. Mandatory Professional Development is the title that applies when the Council resolves that all Councillors must attend the event. Discretionary Professional Development is the title used to describe all professional development that is not Mandatory Professional Development.

6. POLICY >>

The Council will reimburse Councillors for expenses as set out in this policy.

In addition to the expenses expressly referred to in the section of this Policy headed *Expense Categories*, the Council will reimburse other expenses that are necessarily incurred to allow the participation of Councillors who experience unusual barriers to participation, such as a disability or cultural responsibilities.

Expense Categories

1. Professional development

The Council will reimburse expenses incurred for:

- all mandatory professional development; and
- discretionary professional development up to a maximum of \$5,000.00 (indexed to CPI annually) during a single local government term; and

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- the Australian Institute of Company Directors Diploma Course tailored for local government held in Townsville.

2. Travel as required to represent Council

The Council will reimburse local, interstate and overseas travel expenses (e.g. flights, car, accommodation, meals and associated registration fees), deemed necessary to achieve the business of Council when:

- a Councillor is acting as an official representative of Council; and
- the activity/event and travel have been endorsed by resolution of Council.

Councillors must travel via the most direct route, using the most economical and efficient mode of transport. The amount of the reimbursement will be the actual amount expended by the Councillor, or where an actual amount cannot be directly substantiated, an equivalent mileage allowance.

NOTE: Any fines incurred while travelling in Council-owned vehicles or privately owned vehicles when attending to Council business, will be the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine.

2.1. Travel bookings

All Councillor travel approved by Council will be booked and paid for by Council. Economy class is to be used where possible although Council may approve business class in certain circumstances.

Airline tickets are not transferable and can only be procured for the Councillor's travel on Council business. They cannot be used to offset other unapproved expenses (e.g. cost of partner or spouse accompanying the Councillor).

2.2. Travel transfer costs

Any travel transfer expenses associated with Councillors travelling for Council approved business will be reimbursed, e.g. trains, buses and ferry fares. Councillors will be issued with Cabcharge cards for use where they are required to travel by taxi to undertake duties relating to the business of Council.

2.3. Private vehicle usage

When a Councillor has decided to not receive a Council vehicle under the Councillor Facilities Policy, payment for use of the Councillor's private vehicle on Council business will be reimbursed to the Councillor on a kilometre rate as set out in the Australian Taxation Office allowable deductions for motor vehicles.

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In other circumstances, Councillor's private vehicle usage will be reimbursed by Council if the:

- travel has been endorsed by Council resolution;
- claim for mileage is substantiated with log book details; and
- total travel claim does not exceed the cost of the same travel using economy flights plus the cost of taxi transfers.

2.4. Accommodation

All Councillor accommodation for Council business will be booked and paid for by Council.

Accommodation should be selected that provides:

- Council with the best price value; and
- convenient to the conference/meeting.

Council will pay for reasonable expenses incurred for overnight accommodation when Council business requires a Councillor to obtain accommodation away from the Councillor's residence.

2.5. Meals

Councillors will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals when:

- the Councillor incurs the cost personally;
- the meal was not provided within the (registration) costs of the approved activity/event/travel; and
- the Councillor can produce documents sufficient to verify the actual meal cost.

If a councillor cannot produce a receipt for a meal they have purchased then a Statutory Declaration must be completed to claim the reimbursement.

No alcohol will be paid for by Council.

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2.6. Incidental allowance

A daily allowance to cover incidental items necessary for travel is provided to Councillors, eg. newspapers, magazines, snacks including tea and coffee, drinks and personal items.

- The daily allowance for travel within Australia is \$20 per day.
- The daily allowance for international travel is \$40 per day.

2.7. Cabcharge Facility / Reimbursement for Public Transport tickets (rail, ferry, bus)

Councillors will be provided with a Cabcharge facility and reimbursement of costs for public transport utilised to attend official Council functions outside the Townsville City Council area only. (*This is in addition to the reimbursement of costs set out in the section of this policy dealing with Travel Transfer Costs*).

3. Hospitality Expenses

The Mayor will be reimbursed up to \$6,000.00 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business.

Councillors will be reimbursed up to \$500.00 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business.

7. LEGAL PARAMETERS >>

Sections 236(b), 250(ak), 250(ar), 250(as), 250(at), 250(au), 534, Divisions 1, 2 and 4 of the Local Government Act

8. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS >>

Travel Policy – Council Officers
Travel Procedures – Council Officers

Guidelines for Councils as prepared by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation to assist Councils in developing an Expenses Reimbursement Policy

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