

Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Policy

Local Government Act 2009

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred by Councillors in discharging their duties and responsibilities.

2. PRINCIPLES

This policy ensures that the Council's reimbursement of expenses incurred by Councillors is consistent with the local government principles and financial sustainability criteria as defined in the *Local Government Act 2009*.

In addition the principles that underpin this policy are:

- the use of public monies in the public interest by responsible budgeting and accounting;
- fair and reasonable allocation of Council resources (allowances, facilities and other benefits) to enable all Councillors to Conduct the duties of their office;
- transparent decision-making by public disclosure of policy and resolutions; and
- accountability for expenditure and use of facilities through full justification and acquittal.

Support is provided to Councillors when carrying out their roles, and should be fairly compensated in accordance with statutory requirements and community expectations.

This policy provides for actual reimbursement of legitimate expenses and full disclosure through appropriate accountability requirements.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors for the reimbursement of expenses incurred, by them in undertaking their responsibilities.

This policy does not provide for salaries or other forms of Councillor remuneration. Councillor remuneration is determined annually by the Local Government Remuneration and Disciplinary Tribunal.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring this policy is understood and adhered to by all Councillors and relevant workers.

5. DEFINITIONS

Budget allocation – means the budget allocation for Councillor expenditure will form part of the Office of the CEO budget. Council will approve the upper limit of funding of all forms of professional development, training and representation of Council and attendance at other forms of conferences, workshops and the like in its annual budget or as determined by resolution from time to time.

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Council business – means the official business of a Councillor as generally described in section 12 of the *Local Government Act 2009*. 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.*

Entertainment and hospitality – means the cost to Council of providing entertainment or hospitality as outlined in Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy.

Professional development – includes study opportunities, attendance at industry workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improves Councillors' skills and knowledge relevant to their responsibilities as Councillor.

Training – means any facilitated learning activity which is considered by Council to be a requirement for Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities as Councillors.

Reasonable – includes what would be perceived as prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community.

Workers – includes employees, contractors, volunteers and all others who perform work on behalf of Council.

6. POLICY

The Council will reimburse Councillors for expenses as set out in this policy. Any expenses not provided for by this policy will not be reimbursed without express approval from the Chief Executive Officer.

When considering an application for approval of any matter related to this policy, the Council or the Chief Executive Officer must have regard to any relevant budget allocation.

EXPENSE CATEGORIES

6.1 COUNCIL BUSINESS

The Council will reimburse relevant expenses incurred in undertaking Council business which includes:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Attending civic functions or civic events to perform official duties or as an official Council representative;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners and annual general meetings where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending a community to represent Townsville City Council;
- For the Mayor or representative in an official capacity, representing Council at ordinary meetings, annual general meetings, annual or bi-annual conferences of the North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NQROC), Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA), Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and any other events as endorsed at the first special council meeting, are considered Council business. The reasonable expenses incurred by any other Councillor attending these events will be reimbursed only if the Councillor's attendance has been approved by the Council.

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6.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Council will reimburse expenses incurred for Council-approved professional development.

Council will endeavour to provide Councillors with the opportunity to attend conferences, seminars, courses and workshops within the available budget. A register of Councillor attendance and expenditure at professional development events will be maintained for equity and accountability purposes and made available to Councillors.

A budget for Councillor's professional development expenditure will be approved on an annual basis as part of budget deliberations.

6.3 TRAINING

Attendance at the following annual training programs will be approved as part of the annual budget and includes Councillor induction and orientation programs, the annual Elected Members Update (EMU) program facilitated by the LGAQ, programs facilitated by the Queensland and Australian State Governments and the Australian Institute of Company Directors Diploma Course. Councillors' individual training budgets will not be debited for these expenses.

Any additional training programs other than those listed above will require approval from the Council or Chief Executive Officer.

6.4 TRAVEL EXPENSES

The Council will reimburse local, intrastate, interstate and overseas travel expenses (e.g. flights, car, accommodation, meals) deemed necessary for undertaking Council business and approved professional development. Travel expenses will be debited against the individual Councillor's budget allocation.

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.

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

6.4.1 FLIGHT 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 accompanying the Councillor).

6.4.2 TRAVEL TRANSFER COSTS – CABCHARGE, PUBLIC TRANSPORT TICKETS (RAIL, FERRY, BUS)

Councillors will be provided with Cabcharge cards for use where they are required to travel by taxi to undertake duties relating to the business of Council.

Any other travel transfer expenses (e.g. trains, buses and ferry fares) associated with travel will be reimbursed on production of original receipts.

6.4.3 HIRE CAR

The requirement for a hire car should be identified at the time of seeking Council approval for travel. Any subsequent need for a hire car must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

6.4.4 PRIVATE VEHICLE USAGE

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

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A Councillor's private vehicle usage will be reimbursed by council if the claim for mileage is substantiated with log book details, and:

- the travel is within the Townsville local government area and was for council purposes; or
- the travel has been approved by the Council and the total travel claim does not exceed the cost of the same travel using economy flights plus the cost of taxi transfers. (If the claim does exceed those flight and taxi costs, then the reimbursement will be limited to the value of the flight and taxi costs).

6.4.5 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.

When attending conferences, Councillors must take advantage of (any cost savings available from) any package provided by conference organisers and, therefore, stay in the recommended accommodation unless prior approval has been granted by Council.

Council may approve alternative accommodation arrangements taking into account the total costs, location, value for money, convenience and traveller safety.

In determining accommodation locations and standards for all Councillors, every effort will be made to minimise the total cost associated with attendance at the event. Travel time to the event, taxi costs, convenience and hotel services will be considered when booking accommodation. When practical and available, accommodation will be arranged within close proximity to the event venue.

One night's accommodation prior to the event will only be approved where travel to the event on the day of commencement is not practical.

All expenses incurred at the accommodation venue other than accommodation and meals must be settled at the time of departure. It is the Councillor's responsibility to seek reimbursement of legitimate expenses upon return. Reimbursement must be sought using a travel expenses claim form and will not be approved without original receipts.

6.4.6 MEALS

Councillors will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, associated with official business, when:

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

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

6.4.7 INCIDENTAL EXPENSES FOR OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

Councillors will be reimbursed for incidental items necessary for travel.

Incidental expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors after the event on receipt of original receipts, except where the Councillor has applied for reimbursement of incidental expenses consistent with the capped amounts contained in the corporate travel procedure established by the CEO from time to time

6.4.8 TRAVEL INSURANCE

Council has travel insurance arrangements in place that cover all Councillors on authorised Council business, conferences and courses etc. Full policy details can be obtained from Financial Services.

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6.5 HOSPITALITY EXPENSES

Councillors will be reimbursed hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business and in accordance with the allocated annual budget.

All claims for entertainment and hospitality expenses reimbursement (including partners) must be in accordance with Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy.

6.6 COMMUNICATION EXPENSES

All communication must comply with Council's Advertising and Media Relations policies.

6.7 ACCOUNTABILITY

Council is accountable to the community in regards to compliance with this policy.

Details are reported in council's Annual Report and will include:

- the provision of copies of Council resolutions resolving to reimburse expenses to Councillors;
- a copy of this policy;
- the amount of expenses (including conferences and seminars, travel, advertising meals and hospitality) incurred by each individual Councillor;
- details of any overseas travel including Councillor names, dates of travel, destination, purpose and all associated costs;
- travel to be booked through Council's contracted travel provider unless approved by CEO.

All claims for expenses reimbursement will only be processed using Council's approved claim forms with original receipts attached. No claims will be processed through Council's petty cash system.

A quarterly report will be provided to Councillors detailing expenses in each of the categories that have been reimbursed.

7. LEGAL PARAMETERS

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulations 2012

Income Tax Assessment Act 1997

8. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Advertising Spending Policy

Community Engagement Policy

Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy

Motor Vehicle Policy

Councillor Facilities Policy

Taxation Rulings issued by the Australian Taxation Office

Travel Policy – Council Officers

Travel Procedures – Council Officers

Expense Claim Reconciliation Form

FBT Record Keeping and Reporting Guidelines

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