

COUNCIL POLICY

Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities Policy



POLICY TITLE:	Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities Policy
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RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:	Governance
LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN:	Our Governance – Transparent, Accountable and Engaged Governance

1. OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- establish the guidelines through which the Mayor and Councillors may claim reimbursement of legitimate expenses incurred, or to be incurred, in the performance of their duties; and
- provide Councillors with the facilities reasonably necessary to carry out their civic duties as elected representatives of the Shire.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors and is made pursuant to Sections 249-252 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* (the Regulation) .

3. PRINCIPLES

Reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred by Councillors

Councillors should not be financially disadvantaged when carrying out the requirements of the role of Councillor and should be fairly and reasonable compensated in this regard in accordance with community expectations.

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 accountability and transparency

The Councillor Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Facilities Policy will be available to the public in accordance with the Regulation.

Public perceptions and community expectations

Council will provide only those facilities and reimbursements reasonably necessary for the efficient performance of a Councillor's responsibilities.

No private benefit to be derived

All reimbursement of expenses or provision of facilities must be for legitimate business use only, i.e. to enable Councillors to effectively and efficiently carry out their civic duties. Facilities and resources provided to Councillors are for the sole use of Councillors in undertaking their duties and should be used responsibly and appropriately. Spouses, partners and family members of Councillors are not entitled to receive any reimbursement of expenses or provision of Council facilities.

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Equity and Participation

To maximise equity and the participation of Councillors from diverse backgrounds and circumstances, this Councillor Expense Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities Policy expressly permits the reimbursement of expenses that are reasonably and necessarily incurred to allow the participation of Councillors who experience unusual barriers to participation, such as disability or cultural responsibilities.

4. DEFINITIONS

Council – Flinders Shire Council

Council Business – This is official business of a Councillor as generally described in the *Local Government Act 2009* (the Act), conducted on behalf of, and approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements. 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.

Expenses – Expenses are payments made by Council to reimburse Councillors for their reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, when performing their duties as Councillors. These payments are not regarded as remuneration. The expenses may be either reimbursed to Councillors or paid direct by Council for something that is deemed a necessary cost or charge when performing their roles.

Facilities – Facilities provided by Council to Councillors are the 'tools of the trade' required to enable them to perform their duties with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their professional role for the community.

Reasonable – Council must make sound judgements and consider what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to their communities when determining reasonable levels of facilities and expenditure. The community expects limits and does not want to see excessive use or abuse of public funds.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

6. POLICY

Council will reimburse Councillors for expenses and provide Councillors with facilities as set out in this policy. In addition to the expenses and facilities expressly referred to in the section of this Policy headed Expense Categories below, Council will reimburse other expenses that are necessarily incurred to allow the participation of Councillors who experience unusual barriers to participation, such as disability or cultural responsibilities.

Expense Categories

6.1 Professional Development

Council will incur or reimburse expenses related for -

- All mandatory professional development – where Council resolves that all Councillors are to attend training courses or workshops for skills development related to a Councillor's role, the Council may reimburse the total costs of the course; and
- Discretionary professional development deemed essential for the Councillor's role subject to budget constraints – where a Councillor identifies a need to attend a conference, workshop or training to improve skills relevant to their role as a Councillor, other than mandatory training, and where such training and development is expressly approved by Council resolution.

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6.2 Travel as required to represent Council

Council will reimburse local and in some cases interstate (e.g. flights, car, accommodation, meals and associated registration fees) deemed necessary to achieve the business of Council where:

- A Councillor is an official representative of Council; and
- The activity/event and travel has been endorsed by resolution of Council.

Councillors are to travel via the most direct route, using the most economical and efficient mode of transport.

Council will pay for reasonable expenses incurred for overnight accommodation when a Councillor is required to stay outside the Local Government's region.

NOTE: Any fines incurred while travelling when attending to Council business, will be the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine.

6.2.1 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.)

6.2.2 Travel Costs

Any vehicular travel expenses associated with Councillors travelling for Council approved business in their private vehicle will be reimbursed at the per kilometre rate set in the *Queensland Local Government Industry (Stream A) Award – State 2017*. (Refer to 6.2.3 Private Vehicle Use)

Council shall also reimburse transfer costs, for example: Trains, taxis, buses and ferry fares.

Cab charge vouchers may also be used if approved by Council where Councillors are required to undertake duties relating to the business of Council.

6.2.3 Private Vehicle Use

When a Council vehicle is not available, Councillors shall receive payment for the use of their private vehicle when travelling on Council business. Payment will be made on either a per kilometre rate or reimbursement of fuel expenses (upon production of receipts).

The per kilometre rate to be used to reimburse the use of a Councillors private vehicle will be that set in the *Queensland Local Government Industry (Stream A) Award – State 2017*.

In other circumstances, Councillors 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.

Council will not reimburse a Councillor for any damage, loss or injury to people or property arising out of the use of their private vehicle. Councillors are to maintain comprehensive insurance on their vehicles, and claim against their insurance policy in the case of an accident.

6.2.4 Accommodation

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

Council will pay for the most economical deal available. Where possible, the minimum standards for Councillors' accommodation should be three or four star rating.

Where particular accommodation is recommended by conference organisers, Council will take advantage of the package deal that is the most economical and convenient to the event.

6.2.5 Meals

Councillors will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, up to the limits below, when:

- The Councillor incurs the cost personally; and
- The meal was not provided –
 - Within the registration costs of the approved activity/event; or
 - During an approved flight.

The following limits apply to the amount Council will reimburse Councillors for meals:

- Breakfast \$26.80
- Lunch \$30.60
- Dinner \$52.75

No alcohol or mini bar expenses will be paid for by Council.

If private accommodation is provided by a relative or friend, Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed at a rate of \$90/night.

6.2.6 Incidental Allowance

Up to \$20 per day may be paid by Council to cover any incidental costs incurred by Councillors required to travel, and who are away from home overnight for official Council business.

6.3 Hospitality

Councillors may have occasion to incur hospitality expenses while conducting Council business apart from official civic receptions organised by Council. The Mayor will be reimbursed up to \$1,000 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed reasonably necessary in the conduct of Council business. Councillors will be reimbursed up to \$500 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed reasonably necessary in the conduct of Council business. These costs will be reimbursed on presentation of receipts.

6.4 Provision of Facilities

Councillors will be provided with facilities as set out in this policy. In addition to the facilities expressly referred to in the section of this policy headed Facilities, Council will provide other facilities that are reasonably necessary to allow the participation of Councillors who experience unusual barriers to participation such as disability or cultural responsibilities. All facilities provided to Councillors remain the property of Council and must be returned to Council when the Councillor vacates office.

The Facilities provided will include:

6.4.1 Workplace Health and Safety

Councillors will be entitled to all necessary safety equipment to the standard supplied to employees. Councillors are expected to observe the appropriate Workplace Health and Safety measures when at any workplace. Council will reimburse Councillors the cost of obtaining their Construction Industry Training White card.

6.4.2 Uniform Entitlement

Councillors will be entitled to receive a name badge. Councillors will also be provided with corporate uniform equivalent to that provided to staff and will be provided with a corporate jacket.

6.4.3 Mobile Telecommunication Facilities

Mobile telephones will not be provided to Councillors.

Council will reimburse personal mobile phone costs when their periodic bill exceeds their plan value on production of the phone bill.

6.4.4 Office Facilities

Council will provide Councillors with an iPad for the duration of their term of office. In addition, the Mayor will be provided with an office, equipped with a telephone, laptop and printer.

Equipment provided to Councillors remains the property of Council and must be returned to Council when the Councillor vacates office.

6.4.5 Council Office Facilities

Council will provide the following to Councillors with -

- Facilities such as office space and Council meeting rooms
- Secretarial support for Mayors and Councillors
- Use of Council landline telephone and internet access
- Document faxing and / or scanning
- Printing, photocopying, paper shredding
- Stationary
- Publications – copies of the act and other legislation, books journals considered necessary
- Other administrative necessities which Council reasonably considers necessary to meet the business of Council

6.4.6 Vehicle Use

Council will provide the Mayor with a Council supplied vehicle (4x4 Station Wagon or equivalent) for Council business purposes. The vehicle is to be 'home garaged' at the Mayor's place of residence. The vehicle remains the property of Council and must be returned once the Mayor vacates office.

6.4.7 Maintenance costs of any Council owned equipment

Council will cover all ongoing maintenance costs associated with Council owned facilities or equipment provided to Councillors to ensure it is operating for optimal professional use.

6.4.8 Insurance Cover

Council will insure Councillors in the event of injury sustained or liability arising out of the performance of their civic duties. Council will pay the policy excess under this cover for claims made by or against a Councillor resulting from conducting official Council business.

6.4.9 Legal Representation

Council will cover costs incurred through injury, investigation, hearings or legal proceedings into the conduct of a Councillor, or arising out of, or in connection with the Councillor's performance of his / her civic functions. Where it has been found that the Councillor breached the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009*, the Councillor will reimburse Council all associated costs incurred by Council.

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7. CARETAKER PERIOD

Once the caretaker period commences, Councillors shall not use Council facilities for political or election purposes and only be eligible to claim expense reimbursement for costs relating to routine activities or as otherwise approved by Council resolution.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy will be made available to all Councillors and staff on Council's network. Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

9. RELATED LEGISLATION

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Queensland Local Government Industry (Stream A) Award – State 2017*

10. RELATED DOCUMENTS (LOCAL LAWS, POLICIES, DELEGATIONS ETC)

- Councillor Remuneration Policy
- Entertainment and Hospitality Policy

11. REVIEW TRIGGER

Policy is to be reviewed annually.

12. PRIVACY PROVISION

Council respects and protects people's privacy and collects, stores, uses and discloses personal information responsibly and transparently when delivering Council services and business.

13. APPROVAL

Adopted at the 21 November 2023 Council Meeting - Resolution Number 3838.