
General Policy
EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Intent The purpose of this policy is to set the parameters to authorise payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors and provide resources including administrative support to assist Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities.

Scope This policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors and is made pursuant to section 250 of *the Local Government Regulation 2012*.

PROVISIONS

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking official Council business and are to be provided with the appropriate support to assist them in undertaking their duties. A budget will be allocated each financial year for reasonable expenses to be incurred in accordance with this policy.

Resources provided to Councillors are for the sole use of Councillors while undertaking their duties and must be used responsibly and appropriately.

DEFINITION
Official Council Business/ Duties

Official Council duties are activities conducted on behalf of Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy a legislative requirement, perform ceremonial activities or achieve business objectives of Council. Official Council duties should result in a benefit being achieved either for the Local Government and/or the local community.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Undertaking professional development opportunities;
- Attending civic functions or events;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners, annual general meetings and the like where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending community events (eg. School fetes, community group awards and presentations, fundraisers); and
- Attending networking events and business meetings when attending as a Councillor.

Participating in a event without formal invitation as a Councillor or being a representative on a board not associated with Council, is not regarded as official Council duties.

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES
Conference and External Meetings

A Councillors travelling overseas in an official capacity or a Councillor attending a conference where they will be required to vote on behalf of Council must be approved by a full Council.

If a Councillor wants to attend a conference or external workshop/seminar they must submit a request to the Mayor for approval. The conference or external workshop/seminar must have a direct relationship to an operational area of Council and the Councillor should be able to demonstrate a benefit to the ratepayers of

Cairns. Prior to attending the conference or external workshop/seminar the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) may provide input on relevance to the organisation.

Councillors are required to prepare and table a report at the relevant committee meeting or workshop immediately following return from the conference, external workshops/seminars and the report should include summary and outcomes / learnings.

Expenses covered when attending conference / external workshop/seminars include:

Conference registration fees

Where Councillors have received approval to attend a conference, workshop/seminar, Council will make payment on behalf of the Councillor and/or reimburse any reasonable expenses incurred by the Councillor associated with their attendance.

Economy / Discount airfare

All Councillor travel will be booked and paid for by Council. Economy class is to be used where possible although upgrade may be approved in certain conditions or at the Councillors expense. Airline tickets will not be transferable, but flight insurance will be paid to cover Councillors travelling for official Council business.

Accommodation

Councillors will be entitled to stay at hotel accommodation when it is considered necessary to attend to official Council business, or where it is not practical for the Councillor to attend an early morning commitment or return home for the night.

Meals

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for the cost of a meal when travelling or attending to official Council business outside the region. Provided the Councillor incurs the cost personally, and the meal was not provided as part of the registration costs of the activity / event or during a funded flight and receipts are able to be presented.

Incidental Expenses

Councillors are eligible for the following incidental expenses:

- An allowance of \$20 will be paid to cover newspapers, magazines, snacks, tea and coffee, private phone calls, and personal items whilst travelling on official Council business;
- Cab charge facility or reimbursement for public transport will be paid for Council approved Conferences and / External Meetings.

Training and Professional Development

Where the Mayor or CEO invite Councillors to attend training courses or workshops/seminars related to a Councillor's role, Council will reimburse the total costs of the course. There is no requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances.

Expenses covered for Training and Professional Development is identical as that detailed in Conference and External Meetings.

Discretionary Professional Development

Each Councillor can request to attend, workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improve their skills relevant to the role of Councillor subject to budget considerations. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Mayor and CEO.

There is no requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances. Councillor must submit a request in writing, with all the relevant documentation to Mayor at least 14 days prior to the commencement date.

Vehicles

The use of a Councillors private vehicle for Council business will be reimbursed by Council, with Councillors electing one of the following two options;

- a) Councillors accept an annual payment, paid fortnightly as reimbursement for the use of private vehicles for Council business as per below table; or

- b) Reimbursement claimed based on logbook substantiation of the relevance of the travel for Council business. The amount reimbursed will be based upon the published Australian Taxation Office business use of a motor vehicle cents per kilometre rate applicable at the time of travel. Claims must be submitted on the prescribed form and submitted on a monthly basis.

Councillors must advise the Payroll which option they are selecting. Councillors may opt to change reimbursement method at the start of each financial year.

The annual vehicle allowance is as follows and will be paid fortnightly:

Division 1	\$15,000
Division 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	\$5,500
Division 8	\$8,000
Division 9	\$13,000

The Mayor will be provided with a fully maintained Council vehicle.

Definitions for use of a private vehicle:

- Official Council business – to or from official Council business to another location for official Council business
- Council private – to or from home, a private appointment or other non-Council business to a location for official Council Business
- Private – to or from home to a private appointment or a location for other non-Council business

Councillors are provided with parking exemption for Council regulated parking zones for their private vehicle used for official Council business. Councillors must be aware of the conditions of use.

Administrative Supports and Access to Council Office Facilities

Council is responsible for the provision of appropriate administrative support and facilities to ensure all Councillors are able to perform their duties and undertake Council business. Administrative support and resources are provided to Councillors for the sole purpose of legitimate Council business and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

Councillors will be provided with the following:

- Access to workstations within the Administration Building as well as kitchen amenities and restrooms;
- Council meeting rooms for usage as required and when available;
- Administrative support for Council related business;
- Use of Council landline telephone and internet access;
- Each Councillor will be provided with a mobile phone to assist Councillor in undertaking their role;
- Laptop / computer as defined by Council;
- Access to printer, photocopies, paper shredder, and/or scanner;
- Stationary and personalised letterhead including postage costs, for undertaking duties associated with their position (not campaign related); and
- Any other administrative necessities, which Council resolves, are necessary to meet the business of Council.

In addition to the above, the Mayor will be provided with a separate office and dedicated officer for administrative support.

Councillors are expected to comply with the same conditions of use, guidelines and processes for business and communication tools that apply to employees. Support for the Council supplied laptops and peripheral devices will be provided through Council's IS Service Desk (within standard business hours). If rectification requires more than phone support the Council provided laptop or peripheral devices will be returned to Spence Street office by the Councillor.

Upon receipt of a claim with relevant receipts, a maximum amount of \$600, per annum, will be reimbursed to Councillors for home communication expenditure.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Council will provide to Councillors necessary PPE and other equipment for use on official Council business as and when required.

Insurance Cover

Councillors will be covered under relevant Council insurance policies while on Council business. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, Councillors liability and personal accident and domestic and overseas travel.

Council will pay the excess (deductible) on all insurance claims, made in accordance with Legal Assistance for Councillors and Employees Policy.

Council will cover any costs incurred through injury, investigation, hearings or legal proceedings into the conduct of a Councillor where arising out of, or in connection with, the Councillor's performance of their Councillor functions. Where it has been found that the Councillor breached the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009* or other legislation, then there will be no cover provided to the Councillor and the Councillor must reimburse Council all associated costs incurred by Council.

Hospitality

Councillors may incur hospitality expenses while conducting official Council business, apart from civic receptions organised by Council. The Mayor particularly, may require additional reimbursement when entertaining dignitaries outside of official events.

To allow of this expense, the following amounts can be claimed:

Councillors	Up to \$500 per annum
Mayor	As per budget

To claim, the Mayor or Councillors must provide a written statement of whom they entertained and receipt of costs. Claims must be presented within 3 months of incurring the expense.

Mobile Office

Councillors are encouraged to engage with the community to fulfil their duties and by doing so may incur expenses to have a presence at shopping centres, markets etc. An allowance of \$1,000 per annum will be payable for this purpose. The allowance will be paid at the start of each financial year.

EXCLUSIONS

Councillors shall not be reimbursed for expenses incurred for spouses, partners or other family members. The exception is the Mayor's partner when performing an official duty on behalf of Council.

Alcohol is excluded from reimbursement.

Participating in a community group event without formal invitation as a Councillor or being a representative on a Board not associated with Council, is not regarded as Council business.

Councillors must not use council-provided resources such as vehicles, phones, email accounts or printers for campaigning. This applies at any time, not just during the official election period / caretaker period.

SUMMARY OF POLICY PROVISIONS

Heading	Description
Conferences / Seminars	Acceptance of costs, including travel and accommodation, associated with attending Council approved conferences or external workshops/seminars.
Discretionary Professional Development	Payment for Councillor to undertake professional development course or similar, including associated travel and accommodation expenses if applicable subject to budget considerations.

Heading	Description
Travel as required by represent Council	Acceptance of costs associated with travel on behalf of and representing Council.
Vehicles	Annual allowance or reimbursement of mileage for use of private vehicle for official Council business.
Administrative Support / Access to Council Office Facilities	Provision within Council of office space, carparking, laptop/IT needs, printer, copier etc
Insurance Cover	Insurance coverage for public liability, professional indemnity, personal accident.
Council Memberships	Ability for Councillors at their own expense to access staff offered benefits membership such as Fitness Passport.
Support Resources	Dedicated support via Executive Support Officer - Councillors and Personal Assistant to Mayor.
Legal Assistance	Acceptance of legal assistance costs as required in support of actions against Councillors in undertaking their role.
Telecommunications	Maximum amount of \$600, per annum, will be reimbursed to Councillors for home communication expenditure.
Hospitality	Acceptance of hospitality costs in hosting dignitaries etc outside of formal Council events: Councillors - \$500 per annum Mayor – as per budget
Mobile Office Reimbursement	Allowance of \$1,000 per annum for Councillors to off-set costs associated with operating a mobile office in shopping centres, markets or similar.

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This policy remains in force for a period of no longer than six (6) months after the next quadrennial election.

Director Responsible for Review:

People and Organisational Performance

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 13/11/2001

CURRENT ADOPTION: 19/6/2024

DUE FOR REVISION: 19/06/2029

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:



John Andrejic
Acting Chief Executive Officer