

Expenses Reimbursement for Councillors

Policy type	Council
Function	Councillors
Policy Owner	Governance
Effect date	23 May 2013

1. Purpose

This policy provides for payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by councillors for discharging their duties and responsibilities as councillors and for the provision of facilities to councillors for that purpose. This policy does not provide for salaries or other forms of councillor remuneration as this is determined independently by the Local Government Remuneration and Discipline Tribunal.

2. Scope

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

3. Definitions and principles

CEO refer to the Chief Executive Officer of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council.

Official Council Business - activities conducted on behalf of Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business objectives for the Council. Official Council business should result in a benefit being achieved, either for the Local Government and/or the local community. This includes:

- Attendance at Council, Committee and Briefing meetings;
- Attendance at prescribed Local Government training activities/ workshops, seminars and conferences;
- Attendance at civic ceremonies and community events where a formal invitation has been received inviting Councillors in their capacity to undertake official duty;
- Attendance at public meetings, annual meetings or presentation dinners where invited as a Councillor;
- Attendance at meetings of community groups where appointed as a Council delegate to the group or invited to speak about Council programs and activities;
- Attendance at private meetings with constituents, where arranged through official Council channels and details of discussions are documented in official records or diaries;
- Attendance at civic functions on behalf of the Mayor;
- Attendance at organised meetings/ deputations/ inspections/ community consultations on a one-off basis; and

- Attendance at organised meetings pertaining to a meeting of a community organization where a delegate of the Council has not been appointed to attend or is unavailable to attend.

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. This will include flights, car hire, accommodation, meals and associated registration fees as required. Council shall not reimburse councillors for expenses incurred by a partner or family member who may accompany a councillor to an approved official event, unless otherwise approved by Council.

Professional Development - Attendance at workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improve Councillor's skills relevant to the role of a 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.

4. Principles

This Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Policy is based on the following principles:

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 maximize 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.

5. 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

5.1 Professional Development

The Council will reimburse expenses incurred for:

- All mandatory professional development; and
- Discretionary professional development up to a maximum of \$5,000 during a single Local Government term.

5.2 Travel as required to represent Council

The Council will provide local, interstate and overseas travel expenses 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 has been endorsed by the Mayor and/or CEO.

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

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.*

5.2.1 Travel bookings

All Councillor travel approved by Council will be booked and paid for by Council.

Economy class is to be used where possible for air travel although Council may approve Business class in certain circumstances.

Overseas travel can only be approved by a Council resolution.

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 (eg. Cost of partner or spouse accompanying the Councillor).

5.2.1.1 Retail reward scheme points – *where these accrue from the use of a corporate credit card or other purchasing arrangement, the reward scheme points belong to the Department (Council in our case). Frequent flier points accrued by those travelling on official business may be used by the individual.*

5.2.2 Travel transfer costs

Any travel transfer expenses associated with Councillors travelling for Council approved business will be reimbursed, eg. Trains, buses, taxi and ferry fares. Receipts must be provided with all claims for reimbursement.

5.2.3 Private vehicle usage

Councillors shall be given access to a suitable council vehicle for official business where such purpose has been approved by Council or the CEO in advance. The Mayor will be provided with a Council vehicle with full private use. Councillors are encouraged to utilise council vehicles, particularly for travel out of the region.

Councillors' private vehicle usage will be reimbursed if the usage is for official council business and where required, endorsed by Council. This includes travel to and from councillors' principal place of residence to:

- attend official council business/meetings/functions/community events and public meetings in the role of councillor;
- investigate issues/complaints regarding council services raised by residents/rate payers and visitors to the region.

Councillors making a claim for reimbursement of private vehicle usage can do so by submitting the appropriate form detailing the relevant travel based on log book/diary details. The amount reimbursed will be based on the published Australian Tax Office business-use-of motor vehicle-cents-per-kilometer method and kilometer rate applicable at the time of travel.

In other circumstances, Councillor's private vehicle usage will be reimbursed by Council if the total travel claim does not exceed the cost of the same travel using Economy flights plus the cost of transfers.

5.2.4 Accommodation and Meals

All accommodation for a councillor travelling on 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. 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.

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.

The cost of meals is allowable up to:-

- | | |
|---------------|---------|
| (a) Breakfast | \$35.00 |
| (b) Lunch | \$35.00 |
| (c) Dinner | \$55.00 |

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.

5.2.5 Hospitality Expenses

The Mayor will be reimbursed up to \$1,000 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business.

5.2.6 Use of Corporate Cards

The Mayor shall be provided with a corporate credit card for Council business use in accordance with Council's *Use of Corporate Credit Card Policy*.

5.3 Facilities

All facilities provided to Councillors remain the property of Council and must be returned to Council when a Councillor's term expires.

5.3.1 Administrative Tools

Administrative tools will be provided to Councillors as required to assist Councillors in their role. Administrative tools include:

- Office space and meeting rooms
- Computers/iPad with internet access
- Mobile phone
- Stationery
- Access to photocopiers, printers and facsimile machines
- Publications
- Use of Council landline telephones and internet access in Council offices
- Personal protective equipment
- Name badge
- Fulltime administrative support will be provided for the Mayor with support provided to Councillors as required

5.3.2 Legal Assistance and Insurance

Legal assistance will be provided to Councillors as per Council policy, "*Provision of Legal Assistance for Employees, Councillors and Audit Committee Members*".

Councillors will be covered under Council insurance policies while discharging civic duties. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, personal accident and/or workers compensation and travel (domestic).

5.4 Reimbursement of Expenses

Councillors who require reimbursement of personal expenses incurred whilst undertaking Council duties, must submit receipts to their Executive Support Officer to be approved by the CEO. Receipts must be submitted within 30 days of incurring expense and preferably no later than 30 June of that year to allow reimbursements to be made in the financial year they were incurred. This will also allow for appropriate and accurate recording of expenses in the Annual Report.

5.5 Reporting

Council's Annual Report must contain information on councillor expenses reimbursement and provision of facilities as stipulated in the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Related forms, policies and procedures	Use of Corporate Credit Card Policy Provision of Legal Assistance for Employees and Councillors
Relevant legislation	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i> <i>Local Government Regulation 2012 - Section 249 - 252</i> <i>Councillor Code of Conduct Policy</i>
Reference and resources	Cassowary Coast Regional Council Annual Reports

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