



Blackall-Tambo

Regional Council

Councillors' Expenses Reimbursement Policy

Policy Number: Stat 2	Effective Date: 15/06/2022
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Policy Compiled by:	
Policy Approved by:	

BACKGROUND

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

PURPOSE

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 facilities to assist Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities.

SCOPE

This policy aims to ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred by the Mayor and Councillors.

This policy is aligned to the principles underpinning the *Local Government Act 2009* (the Act), that is:

- Transparent and effective processes and decision-making in the public interest;
- Good governance of, and by, local government; and
- Ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and local government employees.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The policy complies with the Statement of Principles, set out in the guidelines:

- Reasonable expenses reimbursement to Councillors
- Public accountability and transparency
- Public perceptions and community expectations
- No private benefit to be derived
- Equity and participation

DEFINITIONS

Council Business shall mean official business conducted on behalf of Council, where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve Council objectives. For example, attend official Council meetings, Councillor forums and workshops, formal professional development training relevant to Councillor responsibilities, Committees/Boards as Council's official representative, and scheduled meetings relating to Council appointments.

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Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local community, for example, this includes but is not limited to:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, Committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Investigating issues/complaints regarding Council services raised by residents/ratepayers/visitors to the Council area;
- Undertaking approved professional development opportunities;
- Attending civic functions or events;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners, annual general meetings where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending a community event (e.g. school fete, community group awards and presentations, fundraisers) where a formal invitation has been received.

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

Councillors shall mean the Mayor and Councillors unless otherwise stated.

Expense shall mean payments made by Council to reimburse Councillors for their reasonable expenses incurred when discharging 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 on Council business.

Facility shall mean the 'tools of trade' provided by Council, required to enable Councillors to perform their duties with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their professional role for the community.

Hospitality expense is defined in Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy, Stat 9 as reasonable costs associated with entertaining visitors (where Council has an interest in, or a specific obligation towards, facilitating the visit).

Professional Development shall mean attendance by a Councillor at an event where the Councillor expects to develop further skills and knowledge relevant to their role as a Councillor.

Reasonable shall mean the application of sound judgement and consideration of what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community when determining levels of facilities and expenditure.

PAYMENT OF EXPENSES

Expenses will be paid to a Councillor through administrative processes approved by the Council's Chief Executive Officer subject to:

- the limits outlined in this policy, and
- a completed claim form authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

EXPENSE CATEGORIES

Professional development

A local government will reimburse expenses incurred for:

- mandatory professional development, and
- discretionary professional development deemed essential for the Councillor's role.

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Travel as required to represent Council

A local government may reimburse local and in some cases interstate and overseas travel expenses (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 have 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 in Council-owned vehicles or privately owned vehicles when attending to Council business, will be the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine.

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).

Travel transfer costs

Any travel transfer expenses associated with councillors travelling for council approved business will be reimbursed: 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,

Private vehicle usage

Councillors' private vehicle usage may 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.

Vehicle Available for Use by the Mayor

A fully maintained Council fleet vehicle is available for use by the Mayor for all official Council related business.

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.

Meals

A local government will reimburse costs of meals for a Councillor when:

- the Councillor incurs the cost personally, and
- the meal was not provided within the registration costs of the approved activity/event.

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

Breakfast	\$20.00
Lunch	\$25.00
Dinner	\$35.00

No alcohol will be paid for by Council.

Incidental allowance

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

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES FOR MAYOR

Hospitality

The Blackall-Tambo Regional Council will reimburse the Mayor up to \$1,000 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business on the production of appropriate tax invoices and completion of a reimbursement form.

PROVISION OF FACILITIES

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

PRIVATE USE OF COUNCIL OWNED FACILITIES

Based on the principle that *no private benefit is to be gained* the facilities provided to Councillors by local governments are to be used only for Council business unless prior approval has been granted by resolution of Council.

The Council resolution authorising private use of Council owned facilities will set out the terms under which the Councillor will reimburse Council for the percentage of private use. This would apply when Councillors have private use of Council owned motor vehicles and/or mobile telecommunication devices.

FACILITIES CATEGORIES

Administrative tools

Administrative tools should be provided to Councillors as required to assist Councillors in their role.

Administrative tools include:

- office space and meeting rooms
- computers
- stationery
- access to photocopiers
- printers



- facsimile machines
- publications
- use of Council landline telephones and internet access in Council offices

Secretarial support may also be provided for Mayors and Councillors.

Council may provide a Councillor with home office equipment including computer, internet access if necessary.

Maintenance costs of Council owned equipment

Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and reasonable wear and tear costs of Council-owned equipment that is supplied to Councillors for official business use.

This includes the replacement of any facilities which fall under Council's asset replacement program.

Name Badge and Safety Equipment for Councillors

A local government may provide Councillors with:

- a name badge;
- the necessary safety equipment for use on official business, e.g. safety helmet/boots.

Use of Council vehicles on Council business

Councillors may have access to a Council vehicle for official business.

Private use of vehicles

Private use of Council owned vehicles is permitted if prior approval has been granted by resolution of Council. Council will, in its resolution authorise private use, set out the terms for the Councillor to reimburse Council for the private use.

Telecommunication needs - mobile devices and computers

Mobile telecommunication devices previously owned by a local government may be used by Councillors for official Council business use during the transitional period.

Additionally, where Council deems it necessary to acquire new mobile devices due to the new local government structure, extra facilities may be approved by Council resolution.

Example: Mobile telephones or hand-held personal digital assistants

Computers are supplied to Councillors for official use. The BTRC Computer, Email & Internet Usage Policy (Admin 6) outlines the conditions of use.

Insurance cover

A local government will indemnify or insure Councillors in the event of injury sustained while discharging their civic duties.

The local government will pay the excess for injury claims made by a Councillor resulting from conducting official Council business.

Fuel costs

Fuel for a Council-owned vehicle used for official Council business, will be provided or paid for by Council.

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Car parking amenities

Councils are to provide Councillors with:

- car parking at the local government office premises, and/or
- reimbursement of parking costs paid by Councillors while attending to official Council business.

CHANGES SINCE LAST REVISION

New Policy as of 15/06/2022 to reflect current procedures.

RECORDS

When completed and approved the original, signed hard copy of the policy is filed in the Master File. Electronic copies are saved in the appropriately labelled folder in InfoXpert.