

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Councillors Expenses Reimbursement Policy is to ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

1.2 Facilities

This Policy will also ensure that elected members are provided with reasonable facilities to assist them in carrying out their civic duties.

1.3 Principles

The Policy complies with the Local Government Principles, set out in Section 4 (2) of the *Local Government Act 2009*:

- a. transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and
- b. sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services; and
- c. democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement; and
- d. good governance of, and by, local government; and
- e. ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees.

1.4 Effect

The Councillors Expenses Reimbursement Policy (the Policy) will take effect from the date of the resolution by Council to adopt the Policy.

1.5 Limit

Council may by resolution reduce or limit benefits receivable under this Policy.

2. Scope

Under Chapter 8 Administration, Part 1 Councillors, Division 2, Section 250 of the Local Government Regulation 2012, the Hinchinbrook Shire Council (the Council) must adopt by resolution an expenses reimbursement policy. This Policy is for the provision of facilities to Councillors for the purpose of discharging their responsibilities and civic duties.

3. Responsibility

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

4. Definitions

A70 is the Australian Taxation Office

Council Business is official business conducted on behalf of, and approved by Council, where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business continuity for the Council. Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local government area. Example: Council may decide that Council business includes civic ceremony duties such as opening a school fete. Participating in a community group event or being a representative on a board not associated with Council is not regarded as Council Business.

Councillors and Elected Members shall mean the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors (inclusive).

Expenses are payments made by Councils to reimburse Councillors for their reasonable expenses incurred or to be 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 performing their roles.

Facilities provided by Councils to Councillors are the 'tools of 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's 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. Policy

1.1 Payment of Expenses

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

- The limits outlined in this Policy;
- Council endorsement by resolution where required by the Policy;
- In the case of reimbursement of expenses, production of receipts and tax invoices or evidence that such expenses have been paid is required prior to reimbursement; and
- Expenses reimbursement must be claimed within one (1) month of such expense having been paid by the Councillor and claims for reimbursements outside of this period will not be accepted unless approved by Council.

1.2 Expense Categories

1.2.1 Professional Development/Conferences/Workshops/Training

Council will reimburse expenses incurred for Mandatory Professional Development for:

- attendance at Regional, State or National Local Government associated conferences, subject to attendance being approved by Council
- attendance at Regional Meetings and Workshops associated with the portfolio responsibility of the relevant Councillor.

There is a requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances.

Discretionary Professional Development

Each Councillor can attend at their own discretion (workshops, courses, training, seminars and conferences) that improve their skills relevant to the role of Councillor. The training is limited to \$5,000 per Councillor in each quadrennial term of office.

There is no requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances.

However, the Councillor must submit a request to the Chief Executive Officer prior to attending and provide all relevant documentation within fourteen (14) days of attending the event.

1.2.2 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, taxis 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.

1.2.3 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).

1.2.4 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.

1.2.5 Private Vehicle Usage

Councillors private vehicle usage for official Council business may be reimbursed for:

- a. Official Council business;
- b. Official Council meetings/functions, community events and public meetings in the role of Councillors; and
- c. To investigate or inspect issues/complaints regarding Council services raised by residents/ratepayers/visitors to the region.



Councillors making a claim for reimbursement for using their private vehicle for Council business shall submit the appropriate form monthly, detailing the relevant travel based on logbook details. (Councillors will be supplied with an appropriate logbook to assist in the process.)

The amount reimbursed will be based on the published Australian Taxation Office (ATO) business use of motor vehicle cents per kilometre method and kilometre rate applicable at the time of travel.

1.2.6 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.

1.2.7 Meals

Council will reimburse costs of meals for a Councillor when:

- the Councillor incurs the cost personally;
- the meal was not provided:
 - within the registration costs of the approved activity/event; and
 - during an approved flight; and
- the Mayor or Councillor submits a receipt or tax invoice with the reimbursement claim.

If a Mayor or Councillor is unable to submit a receipt or tax invoice and seeks reimbursement for meals, she/he shall be reimbursed in accordance with the [ATO's Reasonable Travel Allowances](#) on the submission of a Statutory Declaration.

No alcohol will be paid for by Council.

1.2.8 Mayor's Hospitality Fund

The sum of \$4,000 per annum is available for the Mayor's hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business.

1.3 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, except in the case of a Council supplied lap top and/or laser printer/fax/scanner whereby the relevant Councillor will have the option to purchase the equipment at the end of their current term. The purchase price will be at least equal to the depreciated value of the item.

1.4 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.



1.5 Facilities Categories

1.5.1 Administrative Tools

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

Administrative tools include:

- suitable office space and meeting rooms;
- computers;
- stationery;
- printer, photocopier, paper shredder;
- facsimile machines;
- publications;
- use of Council landline telephones and internet access in Council offices; and
- any other administrative necessities which Council resolves are necessary to meet the business of Council.

Secretarial support will also be provided for the Mayor.

1.5.2 Home Office

Council recognises that, by using contemporary communication technology such as internet and electronic distribution of agendas and minutes, and the distance some Councillors will have to travel if this technology was not used, there is a necessity to provide home office facilities to Councillors.

Council will provide a locally sourced computer package complete with software and security protection for use by the Councillor at their residence or other designated space.

Council will provide a laser printer/fax/scanner/copier device for each Councillor for use at their residence or other designated space.

Council's Information Services Department will visit a Councillor's residence or other designated space and ensure that these devices are set up correctly with their internet access.

Council will pay a computer consumables annual allowance including paper and printer ink of **\$400** per annum.

1.5.3 Telecommunication Needs – Internet Access, Mobile Devices and Landlines

Council will provide the Mayor with a mobile telecommunication device.

Council will pay an annual Communications Allowance in the sum of \$2,500 per annum payable in monthly instalments to Councillors (excluding the Mayor) to help defray administrative expenses (e.g. telephone calls, mobile telephone calls, home internet connection, companion device connectivity) paid by Councillors personally in association with their role as a Councillor and to generally address the needs of the local community.

1.5.4 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. Computer equipment supplied for use at the Councillor residence or other designated space must be returned to the IT Department at the Shire Office for repairs or problem solving diagnosis.

1.5.5 Corporate Uniform and Safety Equipment for Councillors

Council will provide to a Councillor:

- Annual Uniform Allowance in the sum of \$325 for the first year of the Term and \$225 annually thereafter for a Councillor Corporate Wardrobe in accordance with the Corporate Uniform Guide;
- Outdoor employee high visibility shirt for external and local area use only;
- Casual sublimated Hinchinbrook custom made polo shirt to be worn as follows:
 - to attend inspections or casual meetings held with organisations such as Progress Associations;
 - as a casual comfortable shirt to promote the Shire whilst travelling to and from conferences and workshops; and
 - on any other occasion where the Council considers it is in the best interests of the community to be worn.
- Black blazer with Council embroidered logo; and
- Necessary safety equipment for use on official business such as but not limited to safety helmet, safety boots and safety glasses.

1.5.6 Use of Council Vehicles on Council Business

Council will provide the Mayor with a suitable vehicle for use during official Council business including travel to and from home to Council place of business. Official Council business is defined as those functions or activities where the Mayor is officially representing Council as a delegate or invited guest.

Councillors may have access to a Council vehicle for official Council business which for this purpose is defined as those functions or activities where the Councillor is officially representing Council as a delegate or other representative.

A Councillor wishing to use a Council vehicle for Council business must submit a request to the Chief Executive Officer at least five (5) days prior to use, except in exceptional circumstances as determined between the Councillor, Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

1.5.7 Insurance Cover

Councillors will be covered under relevant Council insurance policies while discharging civic duties. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, Councillors liability and personal accident.

Council will pay the excess for injury claims made by a Councillor resulting from the conduct of official Council business and on any claim made under insurance cover.

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 Councillors performance of his / her civic functions. When it has been found that the Councillor breached the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009*, the Councillor will reimburse Council with all associated costs incurred by Council.

1.5.8 Fuel Costs

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

1.5.9 Car Parking Amenities

Council will provide Councillors with reimbursement of parking costs paid by Councillors while attending to official Council business.

6. Legal Parameters

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012* Associated Documents
- Purchasing Policy
- Purchasing Procedure
- Purchasing Card Policy
- Motor Vehicle Policy
- Councillor Reimbursement Claim Form
- Entertainment & Hospitality Policy
- ATO Reasonable Travel Allowance
- ATO Cents per kilometre method

DOCUMENT HISTORY AND STATUS					
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