

Expense Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors Policy

Policy Number: BSC-019	Version: 3
Classification: Statutory	Section: Executive - Governance
Date Approved: 16 March 2022	Resolution Number: 2022.03.004
Policy Replacement: This policy and procedure replaces previous expense reimbursement policies for Councillors and Mayor.	Review Note: This policy is reviewed when any of the following occur: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The related information is amended or replaced. 2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by the Chief Executive Officer. <p>Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than twelve (12) months.</p>
Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer	
Legislation: <i>Local Government Act 2009, Local Government Regulation 2012</i>	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2009* and ensure that clear and concise instruction is available for the reimbursement of Councillor expenses.

1.2. POLICY OBJECTIVES:

This Policy will ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors. This Policy will also ensure that elected members are provided with reasonable facilities to assist them in carrying our council business.

1.3. COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY:

This Policy will commence on adoption. It replaces all other specific Expense Reimbursement – Councillors Policies of Council (whether written or not).

1.4. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Councillors, including the Mayor.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Council will meet or reimburse the cost of or pay allowances to cover the cost of expenses and facilities provision which are necessary and required by elected members for conducting the business of Council. Allowable expenses and facilities to be provided by Council are limited to those contained within Section 3 of this Policy.

3. STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

3.1. KEY PRINCIPLES

To ensure that all Councillors have the facilities and other support necessary to undertake council business. To ensure compliance with community expectations and statutory requirements relating to the payment or reimbursement of legitimate expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors while carrying out their duties and responsibilities as elected representatives of the Barcoo Shire Council.

3.2. SPECIFIC AND STANDARD

3.3. 3.2.1. Expenses Categories

3.2.1.1 Conferences, Meetings and Workshops

Where Council resolves Councillors are required to attend conferences or workshops to either deliver a paper or as a delegate of Council, Council will meet the cost or reimburse expenses associated with attending the event since participation is part of the business of Council.

3.2.1.2 Professional Development - Mandatory Training

Where Council resolves that all Councillors are to attend training courses or workshops for skills development related to a Councillor's role, Council will meet the cost or reimburse the total costs of the course.

Note: Some examples of this training are Councillor Induction, Code of Conduct, Meeting Procedures and Legislative Obligations.

3.2.1.3 Professional Development - Discretionary Training

Where Council gives approval for a Councillor to attend a conference, workshop or training to improve skills relevant to their role as a Councillor, other than mandatory training as above, up to a limit of \$1000 per Council term.

3.2.1.4 Travel Expenses (including taxi, parking and public transport)

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for all travel costs when representing Council on Council business. In some cases this may involve interstate and overseas travel. If Councillors travel using their own private vehicles or planes an allowance can be claimed based on log book details to substantiate the relevance of the travel to Council business.

The amount reimbursed will be the actual amount (or equivalent mileage/plane hours) expended by the Councillor.

The vehicle allowance will be in accordance with RACQ vehicle operating costs as recorded on its web site.

<http://www.racq.com.au/cars-and-driving/cars/owning-and-maintaining-a-car/car-running-costs>

Where a council vehicle is available to be used by the Councillor for council business and the Councillor chooses to use their own private vehicle, the Councillor is not entitled to claim travel costs associated with the use of their own private vehicle.

All approved Councillor travel will be booked and paid by Council. Economy class flights are to be used where possible. Airline tickets purchased are not transferrable.

3.2.1.5 Hospitality Expenses

Elected members may have occasion to incur hospitality expenses while conducting Council business apart from official civic receptions organised by Council. The Mayor, in particular, may require additional reimbursement when entertaining dignitaries outside of official events.

Councillors are entitled to claim reimbursement of expenses incurred to entertain dignitaries to the following annual limit per financial year (Mayor \$4000, Councillors \$500) to entertain dignitaries.

3.2.1.6 Accommodation

Elected members may need to stay away overnight while attending to Council business. Councillors are entitled to stay in a motel/hotel accommodation (4 star or equivalent as available) when it is considered necessary to attend to Council business. When attending conferences, Councillors should take advantage of the package provided by conference organisers and therefore stay in the recommended accommodation.

In all other cases the Chief Executive Officer will authorise reasonable accommodation arrangements. In these instances, Council will meet the cost of or reimburse legitimate accommodation costs.

Where accommodation is provided outside the region, Council will pay for reasonable dry-cleaning costs.

3.2.1.7 Meals and Incidental Expenses

On ordinary or special Council meeting days, Councillors will be provided with a breakfast, lunch and/or dinner (if the meeting continues past 6pm)

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred when travelling or attending Council business outside the region and where it is not included with the accommodation booking. Councillors are entitled to require accommodation within the Shire where due to travel distances they need to arrive the night before a meeting or stay overnight following a meeting to manage fatigue.

Councillors may charge costs to a Council issued credit card or claim for the reimbursement of each actual cost per meal when travelling for business related purposes.

Alternatively, Councillors may claim a daily meal allowance based on the latest Australian Tax Office ruling for reasonable travel expenses for the town in which they are staying. Councillors may only claim a meal allowance where they have personally incurred a cost for the meal.

Reasonable alcoholic beverages are able to be included only with the evening meal in addition to the meal cost.

3.4. MAKING CLAIMS

When seeking reimbursement for expenses, elected members must complete and sign a Councillors Fees and Expenses Claim form and provide receipts for allowable expenses together with details of the Council business that the expenses relate to.

Expenses claims or reimbursement requests which comply with the requirements of this policy should be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer.

Councillors are responsible for ensuring that they do not make claims in excess of allowable limits. Failure to comply with this policy, falsifying claims or the misuse of facilities may represent official misconduct and be referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission

Queensland.

Claims must be presented within 3 months of incurring the expense and claims will be paid on a monthly basis.

CANCELLATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TRAVEL OR ACCOMMODATION

If a Councillor, wishes to cancel travel or accommodation previously planned and booked by the Council, then the Councillor will advise their support staff as soon as possible to maximise the opportunity to recover expenses paid on their behalf.

3.5. PROVISION OF FACILITIES

Council will provide and meet operational costs of facilities which are deemed necessary and required to assist Councillors in their role.

When determining the facilities to be provided, Council has considered what are reasonable requirements and standards for an individual Councillor. If a Councillor chooses a higher standard of facility than that prescribed by Council, any difference in cost must be met by the Councillor personally. Ownership of any facilities provided remains with Council.

3.5.1. Administrative Tools and Access to Council Office Amenities

Council are entitled to use the following facilities: -

- (a) At Council administration Centre – office space, Council meeting rooms, landline telephone, internet;
- (b) Secretarial support;
- (c) Stationary;
- (d) Publications – copies of the Act and other legislation, books, journals considered necessary; and
- (e) Any other administrative necessities which Council considers necessary to meet the business of Council.

3.5.2. Home Office

Councillors will be provided, upon request with a laptop computer or equivalent and multi-function printer for council use.

3.5.3. Maintenance Costs of any Council Owned Equipment

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

3.5.4. Name Badge and Uniform

Council will provide each elected member with a name badge and up to 2 business shirts/blouses. Other things that may be provided include any safety equipment such as overalls, safety helmets or glasses as required by a Councillor in their role.

3.5.5. Vehicle

Council will provide a Council owned vehicle (including fuel) for official business as required from time to time.

Elected members are authorised reasonable private use of Council-owned vehicles when on Council business, on the condition that they reimburse Council for any private use at the adopted mileage allowance rate.

The Mayor is provided with a vehicle that is fully maintained by Council which may be used for full personal use.

3.5.6. Telecommunications

3.5.6.1. Internet Access

All Councillors will receive an internet allowance of \$50 per month towards the cost of their private data line and/or mobile data plans. Councillors who reside in satellite only areas will be entitled to claim \$50 per month towards the cost of satellite data.

3.5.6.2. Mobile Phone

The Mayor will receive an allowance of \$50 per month towards the cost of their mobile phone.

3.5.7. Legal Costs and Insurance Cover

Councillors may be entitled to reimbursement of legal representation expenses if they are related to their role as a Councillor.

Councillors are included in Councils Workers compensation coverage (LGW) that provides for the level of benefits substantially the same as for the employee of council with the exception that elected members cannot bring a common law damages action against council under the *Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*.

Council has included Councillors under its Professional Indemnity Policy (LGM) to be covered under Council insurance policies while attending council business.

3.6. SPOUSE/PARTNER ARRANGEMENTS

Council is not responsible for making arrangements to cater for situations where a spouse or partner accompanies the Councillor to events. Partners of Councillors may accompany Councillors to events at their own cost and can travel in a council vehicle if a seat is available.

4. REFERENCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1. DEFINITIONS

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Word / Term	Definition
Council	means Barcoo Shire Council.
Council Business	Council Business is defined as activities conducted on behalf of, and approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business objectives for the Council. Council business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local community. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing for, attending and participating in Council Meetings, committee meetings, workshops, deputations and inspections.• Preparing for and attending meetings of associated bodies (i.e. LGAQ, RAPAD etc);• Attending civic ceremonies and community events such as representing Council at Anzac Day ceremonies or opening a school fete, where they have been formally invited in their capacity as Councillor to undertake the official duty;• Attending public meetings, annual meetings or presentation dinners where invited as a Councillor;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending meetings of community groups where invited to speak about Council programs or initiatives; • Private meetings with constituents (residents, ratepayers, community groups, developers etc), where arranged through official council channels and details of discussions are documented in official records or diaries.
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4.2. RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

BSC Advertising Spending Policy

BSC Corporate Credit Card Policy

BSC Employee Code of Conduct Policy

BSC Financial Delegation Register to Council Positions Policy

BSC Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy

BSC Gifts and Benefits Policy

BSC Internet and Email Usage Policy

BSC Motor Vehicle Policy

BSC Public Interest Disclosure Policy

BSC Training and Professional Development Policy

BSC Workplace Discrimination Policy