



## REASONABLE EXPENSES FOR TRAVEL AND ACCOMODATION BY COUNCIL MEMBERS POLICY

Type:	Council – Elected Members		
Owner:	Council		
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer		
Approval Date:	28/01/2025	Next Review:	1/07/2026
Records Number:	179570	Council/CEO Decision:	OMC-2025-006
Legislation Reference:	Section 109 (1) of the <i>Local Government Act 2019</i> .		

### 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out council member entitlements for payment or reimbursement of reasonable expenses for travel and accommodation necessary for attending council meetings and to the business of Council in accordance with a prior resolution.

### 2 SCOPE

This policy applies to elected members with Katherine Town Council.

### 3 DEFINITIONS

**Allowance** means a benefit, financial, material, or otherwise, payable and/or provided to an Elected Member in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2019*.

**CEO** means Chief Executive Officer.

**Incidental expenses** mean minor but necessary expenses associated with your council-related travel – for example, a car parking fee, bus ticket or a charge for using the phone or internet for work-related purposes at your overnight accommodation. The reasonable amount for incidentals applies in full to each day of travel covered by the allowance, without the need to apportion for any part-day travel on the first and last day.

**Other council business** means carrying out duties in relation to an appointed role (e.g. LGANT delegate), attending a conference, workshop, seminar, training session or other council business approved by council resolution; or carrying out other official duties for the Council.

**Reasonable** means appropriate or fair.

**Reimbursement** means repayment, in arrears, with sufficient documentation as required.

Council is committed to ensuring that travel and accommodation arrangements, including payment and reimbursement of reasonable expenses, are administered in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Travel Allowance is when travel is undertaken that may be away from the ordinary place of work or home of a member. Travel allowance will only come into effect when a member has succeeded duration of travel over a twelve (12) hour period. Members who are required to stay away from home overnight on approved Council business, will be entitled to Travel Allowance.

### Approved process

All requests (and acquittal) for travel and accommodation arrangements are to be in accordance with a written process determined by the CEO and approved by the Council.

### Council meetings

If a council member is required to travel more than 50 km from their place of usual residence within the council area to attend a council meeting, the council member is entitled to payment or reimbursement or reasonable expenses for necessary travel and accommodation.

### Other council business

If a council member is required to travel to attend a conference, workshop, seminar, training session or other council business approved by council resolution, the council member is entitled to payment or reimbursement or reasonable expenses for necessary travel and accommodation.

For travel and accommodation expenses in relation to the use of a council member's professional development allowance, please refer to the *Professional Development Allowance Policy*.

### Travel bookings

Air travel is to be by the most reasonably economic means available and shall not include business or first class. If air travel is required, it will be booked and paid by the Council.

Car rental reservations will be booked and paid by the Council, who will select the best-priced vehicle.

### Mileage allowance

Council vehicles are preferred for official travel. Special circumstances must exist for a council member to use their own private vehicle for council business (for example, when no council vehicle is available). The use of the private vehicle must be communicated to the CEO prior to travel.

Where a council member uses their own private vehicle to attend a council meeting or to council business in accordance with a council resolution and the distance is more than 50km (each way) and are required to stay away from home overnight on approved Council business, a mileage allowance in accordance with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) cents per kilometre method is payable.

Mileage allowances cannot be claimed by passengers.

Council will not take responsibility for any damage relating to use of private vehicles. It is the responsibility of the owner of the vehicle to ensure they have appropriate insurance prior to use.

### Traffic infringement notices and fines

Traffic infringement notices and fines are the individual responsibility of the driver of the vehicle. Any traffic infringement notices, or fines incurred whilst the vehicle is in control of the council member must be paid by the council member.

### Travel allowance

The amount payable for travel allowance (meals and incidentals) is to be in accordance with the ATO Taxation Determination.

All non-essential additional expenses such as telephone calls, room service or mini-bar supplies are the responsibility of the council member. Meal allowances are not to be paid when the meal is included in the cost of the meeting, conference, or other event.

### **Travel Meals and Accommodation**

Council has determined the following times for payable meals:

- Leave for travel before or at 7:00am – Entitled to a breakfast allowance
- Leave for travel after 7:00am No entitlement for a breakfast allowance
- Leave for travel before 11:59am or arrive at 1pm – Entitled to a lunch allowance
- Leave for travel after 12pm – No entitlement for lunch allowance.
- Arrive home (Katherine) before 7:00pm - No entitlement for a dinner allowance
- Arrive home at or after 7:00pm – Entitled to dinner allowance

Incidental claims are per each full 24 hour period. Claims cannot be apportioned for any part-day travel on the first and last day. For example if you leave at 10.00 am and return before 10.00am the next day you are not entitled to Incidental claim.

Where an Elected Member is required to travel on a Saturday, Sunday or outside their ordinary working hours, the traveller will receive incidentals and relevant meals allowances.

### **Accommodation**

If the council member requires accommodation, it will be booked and paid for by the Council. Every effort must be made to ensure that the accommodation cost is at, or below, the amount set by the ATO Taxation Determination for the destination.

Where a council member chooses to self-provide private accommodation at a location, such as with friends or family, for which no payment was made to a commercial operator, the applicable payable rate will be a private accommodation allowance of \$45 per night. This is a flat rate to assist with any contribution to the household. Travel allowance for meals and incidentals are payable.

### **Camping allowance**

Camping allowance is payable to a council member who is required to be away overnight at a location where no commercial accommodation is available and must stay in a camp. The applicable rate is \$45 per night. Personal procurement of camping equipment remains the responsibility of the council member. Full travel allowances for meals and incidentals are payable.

### **Registration fees**

Council will pay registration fees for any training or conferences approved by council resolution.

### **Accompanying partner**

Travelling council members may be accompanied by a spouse or partner, subject to Council not incurring any additional expense.

### **Payment of allowance**

Travel allowances can be paid in advance of travel commencing, or as a reimbursement following the completion of travel.

Within seven (7) days of completed travel the Travel Allowance Form acquittal section must be completed in its entirety, approved by the CEO.

If an accommodation cost is to be reimbursed, it must be for commercial accommodation such as a motel, a hotel or serviced apartment.

Alcohol purchases will not be reimbursed.

Within seven (7) days of returning from travel, the employee must submit a Reimbursement Form including all documentation substantiating the expenditure. Payment of travel allowance or reimbursement can be approved by the CEO

### **Cancellation and non-attendance**

Where travel arrangements need to be changed or cancelled, the council member must inform the CEO as soon as possible to minimise any financial loss to the Council.

Where a council member fails to attend all or part of the business for which travel has been organised and paid, the council member is to notify the CEO as soon as practicable and provide the CEO with the reason(s) for non-attendance.

The CEO is to report any non-attendance at the next ordinary council meeting.

## 5 ASSOCIATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

Professional Development Allowance Policy

Form – Travel Allowance - Elected Member

Form – Elected Member Reimbursement

## 6 REFERENCES AND RELATED LEGISLATION

*Local Government Act 2019*

*Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act 2006*

NT Remuneration Tribunal - Determination of Allowances for Members of Local Councils

Australian Tax Office's *Taxation Determination - Income tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts?*

### Revision History

Version	Approval date	Details of change	Responsible officer
1	23/02/2021	Created and adopted	Policy Review Committee
2	20/06/2023	Reviewed – changed to new template and minor administrative amendments.	Governance and Executive Officer
3	3/12/2024	Reviewed changed travel distance and other elements to reflect the Remuneration Tribunal - Determination of Allowances for Members of Local Councils, forms for travel allowance and reimbursement, and Travel Meals and Accommodation and Payment of allowance sections	Manager Governance and Risk