



Policy Name	Travel and Accommodation (Elected, Local Authority and Council Committee Members)	
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide Elected, Local Authority and Council Committee Members with clarity on their eligibility for travel allowance/s, and the processes for claiming reasonable travel and accommodation expenses that they may incur while conducting official Council business.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Elected, Local Authority and Council Committee Members of Council, and to Council employees with responsibility for administering the provisions of this policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

In the context of this policy the following definitions apply:

Accountable forms include for example Cabcharges vouchers, tickets or meal vouchers.

Council Committee Member means an individual appointed to a Committee established by resolution of Council (e.g., Audit Committee) who is not an Elected Member or employee of Council.

Elected Members means individuals elected to Council, including the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors.

Local Authority Member means a member of a local authority as appointed by the West Arnhem Regional Council.

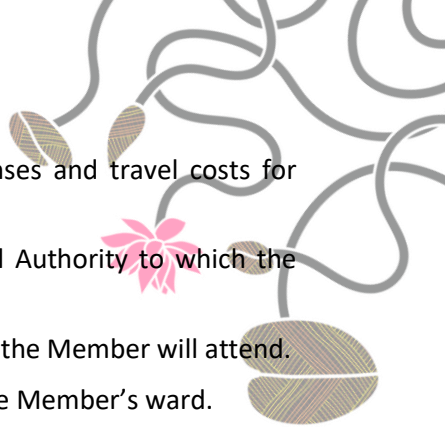
Members means a collective noun referring to Elected Members, Local Authority Members and Council Committee Members of the West Arnhem Regional Council.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

From time to time, Elected and Local Authority Members may be required to travel away from their usual place of residence to attend to official Council business. On these occasions, Council will cover reasonable travel, accommodation, meals, and incidental expenses, in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act*.

What Expenses Can Members Make a Claim For?





Elected and Local Authority Members are entitled to claim all reasonable expenses and travel costs for attendance at:

- A meeting of the Council, Council Committee, Audit Committee, or Local Authority to which the Member belongs.
- Business of the Council where there is a prior resolution of the Council that the Member will attend.

To be eligible for travel and expenses the meeting or event must be held outside the Member's ward.

The travel and expenses allowance will be paid at the current Australian Taxation Office (ATO) rates applicable to Council employees.

Council Committee Members may also be eligible for travel and expenses allowance, to be paid at the current ATO rates applicable to Council employees, for attendance at a Council Committee Meeting.

Travel Must Be Pre-Approved

The pre-approval of travel does not apply to travel undertaken to attend Council and Local Authority meetings. Members do not require pre-approval to travel to Council and Local Authority meetings.

Prior to travel for reasons other than attendance at a Council or Local Authority meeting, Members must provide a travel proposal and itemised itinerary to Council for consideration, using an approved Council form. Council administration can assist with preparing the proposed itinerary.

- Council will only approve travel if the pre-approval process has been completed prior to travel commencing.
- Members cannot claim travel and expenses allowance/s for travel that has not been pre-approved by Council.

If a Member is a member of an external organisation or Board and that organisation or Board pays an attendance allowance or covers expenses involved, that Member will not be entitled to claim travel or expenses from the Council, even if that organisation or Board is relevant to the West Arnhem Regional Council.

Claims for Accommodation Expenses

In all cases, except emergency situations, accommodation for Elected Members is to be pre-arranged and paid in advance by Council administration.

- Accommodation costs should be limited to a maximum of the ATO rates unless special circumstances exist. The current schedule of accommodation allowances is [available here](#).
- Council will only cover the cost of accommodation for the Member. Any additional costs for family staying with a Member will be at the Member's own expense.
- Additional expenses incurred in accommodation, such as telephone calls, in-house movies, mini-bar supplies, room service, and including any further costs incurred for damage or additional cleaning, will be at the Member's own expense.
 - Any expenses charged to Council by the accommodation provider, must be reimbursed by the Member from their next available allowance payment.
 - The CEO or delegate may authorise for the amount to be paid by instalments or substitute a lesser amount to be paid, at the CEO's discretion.

A camping allowance is payable where an Elected, Local Authority or Council Committee Member is required to camp (in a tent or swag) as part of official duties.

Meals and Incidentals



In all cases, except for unforeseen circumstances, meals for Elected and Local Authority Members will be pre-arranged and paid for in advance by Council administration.

Where it is not possible to pre-arrange and pre-pay for meals, a Member may submit a claim for meal expense reimbursement, which is to be paid retrospectively (after travel has been completed) and supported by detailed tax invoices (receipts) for the purchase of meals.

- The amount payable for meals and incidentals will be in accordance with the *ATO Taxation Determination Schedule*. Members cannot claim meal expense reimbursement for the purchase of alcohol.
- The current schedule of meal allowances, as well as the guide to determining eligibility for meal allowances based on the time of day of the travel (refer to the *Accommodation and Travel Reimbursement Form* on the intranet).
- Members cannot claim meal expense reimbursement for meals covered through the Member's accommodation and/or by other parties including meals provided in meetings/conferences, and/or meals provided as part of a fare (such as meals on a plane). If a Member opts out of a pre-arranged meal, Council administration will not accept a claim for reimbursement for a replacement meal.
- Reimbursement of meal expenses is to be claimed using the *Elected Member and Local Authority Member Accommodation and Travel Expenses Reimbursement Form*, with attached copies of any receipts. If a Member is not able to obtain a receipt, they can complete and submit a statutory declaration with the details and nature of the expenditure.

Council will pay incidental costs incurred by Members travelling on approved Council business, through payment of the incidental allowance at ATO rates, after travel has been completed and confirmed. This amount is payable in respect of any day on which a Member undertakes pre-approved travel for official Council business.

Reimbursement for approved meal and incidental expenses will be paid to Elected and Local Authority Members into a bank account of their choice in the earliest pay run, following submission of a completed claim form.

Completed claim forms should be submitted as soon as practicable after travel has been completed. No travel expenses will be reimbursed for claims submitted more than four (4) months after the date of the expenses being incurred.

Claims for Travel Costs

Travel by Own Vehicle

Members may only travel by private vehicle with the prior approval of the CEO or authorised delegate. Private vehicles may be used if Council cannot organise transport (e.g., due to a shortage of pool cars), or where it is more convenient or cost effective for a personal vehicle to be used.

- Pre-approval is not needed for driving the direct route from Gunbalanya/Maningrida directly to Jabiru for a Council meeting during dry season, providing 48 hours' notice is given to council employees.

Where travel by charter flight/commercial flight would be more cost effective than travel by personal vehicle, and the Member has received approval to travel by personal vehicle, Council will only pay a mileage allowance up to the amount of the cost of the flight or the percentage of the charter flight cost that applies to the Member.

A mileage allowance will be paid in accordance with the ATO rate. Council will not provide reimbursement for kilometres travelled for personal business. Kilometres travelled will be calculated using the shortest possible route.



Members driving their own private vehicle while travelling on approved Council business must adhere to Council's *Motor Vehicle Use Policy, Vehicle Management Procedure* and any other relevant policies and procedures, including Council's *Fatigue Management Policy*.

Personal vehicles that are driven by Members are **not** covered by Council's motor vehicle insurance policy. This means Council will not pay for damage or injury sustained whilst driving personal vehicles. Council will not provide a substitute vehicle whilst the damaged vehicle is being repaired.

A Member who incurs parking, speeding or other traffic infringements whilst driving their personal vehicle whilst on Council business, will bear the cost of those infringements/penalties.

An Elected Member will only be provided a kilometre allowance for travel within the West Arnhem Region to Council meetings in Jabiru. Video and Teleconference facilities are available at Council's Darwin office should an Elected Member require them.

Travel by Council Vehicle

Council vehicles can only be used with the approval of the CEO or authorised delegate.

Members driving a Council vehicle while travelling on approved Council business must adhere to Council's *Motor Vehicle Use Policy, Vehicle Management Procedure* and any other relevant policies and procedures, including Council's *Fatigue Management Policy*.

Any accidents or mechanical problems must be reported immediately to the CEO or delegate, and an incident report must be completed within 24 hours when an accident has occurred.

A replacement vehicle is not always possible, nor is it immediate. Should a pool vehicle be available, it will be at the discretion of the CEO.

Travel by Rental Car/Taxi

Rental cars will be booked and paid for by Council administration, in the name of the Member.

Members driving a rental vehicle while travelling on approved Council business must adhere to Council's *Motor Vehicle Use Policy, Vehicle Management Procedure* and any other relevant policies and procedures, including Council's *Fatigue Management Policy*.

Members will be personally liable for any damage to the rental vehicle.

Where a rental car has been provided to a Member, the Member will not be able to claim taxi fares for reimbursement.

Members travelling on pre-approved Council business who do not have a rental car, will be able to submit taxi receipts for reimbursement, under the following circumstances:

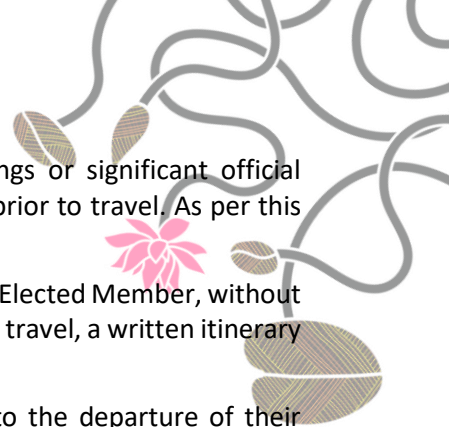
- The taxi fare was from/to the pre-approved accommodation to/from the conference/meeting location (as per the approved itinerary) via the most direct route.
- If taxi receipts indicate that travel was outside of the approved itinerary, Members must provide evidence to Council administration that the travel was for official Council business. If Members cannot provide satisfactory evidence, Council administration will not provide reimbursement.

Charter flights

When booking charter flights, council administration must receive three (3) quotes from charter companies. The cheapest quote should be accepted. If Council does not accept the cheapest quote, a detailed justification must be provided, recorded, and filed.

Council administration will arrange charter flights for all Elected Members to attend West Arnhem Regional Council Meetings. Elected Members may seek permission from the CEO to travel by private vehicle (see above).





All charters that are not for Ordinary Council Meetings, Local Authority meetings or significant official meetings involving the Mayor must be approved at an Ordinary Council Meeting, prior to travel. As per this policy, the travel must be pre-approved by Council.

Only under extraordinary circumstances, can the CEO approve a charter flight for an Elected Member, without approval from Council. If this occurs, the Elected Member must still provide, prior to travel, a written itinerary and justification for the use of a charter flight to Council for consideration.

Members must notify Council administration at least three business days prior to the departure of their charter flight if they do not require the flight. Failure to do so may result in Council seeking reimbursement for costs from the Member's next available allowance payment (unless exceptional circumstances apply).

Travel by commercial flights

Travel by commercial flight must be pre-approved by Council and will be booked and paid for by Council administration.

Where a Member is required to travel by air:

- For flights of less than five hours duration, the Member is entitled to travel by economy class fare.
- For flights with a flight time of five hours or more in duration, the Member is entitled to travel in business class.

Members may upgrade their class of travel at their own expense.

Non-attendance

If a Member has committed to representing Council at an approved conference, meeting, workshop, training, event etc., but fails to be present at the first point of departure without providing a reasonable justification to the CEO, the absent Member will be required to repay all travel, accommodation, registration fees and related costs via deductions from their allowance payments.

If a Member does not attend all or part of the business for which travel has been pre-approved, organised and paid, the Member must explain and provide a reasonable justification for their absence to Council, at the post-travel acquittal presentation to Council. The Member may be required to partially or fully reimburse Council from their next allowance payments.

Post Travel Acquittal

Upon completion of all approved travel, a Member will present a report to Council at the next Ordinary Council meeting. The report to Council shall outline:

- Demonstrated outcomes against the original travel proposal and submitted itinerary.
- Demonstrated benefits from the trip for Council and/or Council operations and/or the constituents of the West Arnhem Region.

Council administration can provide assistance to Members, should they require assistance in writing up their presentation to Council – via a Council Business Paper.

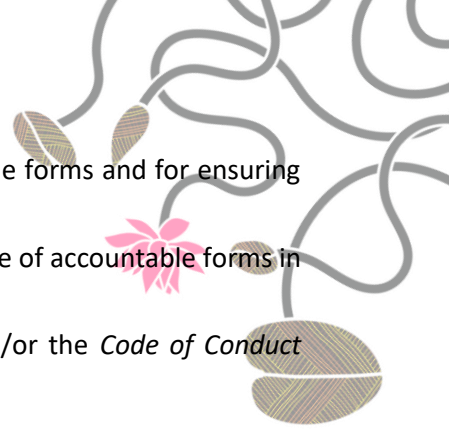
Use of Accountable Forms

In accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government (Financial Administration) Regulations 2021* and Council's internal controls policies and procedures, where appropriate and available, Members are required to request and use Council's accountable forms.

Accountable forms include vouchers, tickets and meal vouchers.

In using accountable forms Members must comply with all relevant policies and procedures.





Council's administrative staff are responsible for issuing Members with accountable forms and for ensuring that Members understand the requirements and procedures for correct use.

Council's Finance Team is responsible for tracking, recording and reconciling the use of accountable forms in accordance with Council's internal controls policies and procedures.

Incorrect use of an accountable form may constitute a breach of this policy and/or the *Code of Conduct (Elected Members, Local Authority Members, and Council Committee Members)*.

Responsibilities

- All Elected and Local Authority Members are responsible for complying with the provisions of this policy.
- Council administration is responsible for assisting Members to prepare and submit required forms, and for booking and paying for Members travel and accommodation.

Breach of Policy

Members found to be in breach of this policy may also be in breach of the *Code of Conduct (Elected Members, Local Authority Members, and Council Committee Members)*. Any alleged breaches will be handled in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Code of Conduct.

5. Responsibilities

The Executive Manager, Office of the CEO is the Policy Custodian for this policy and is responsible for reviewing the operation of the policy (every 3 years or more frequently as may be required), and for monitoring continuing relevance, effectiveness, and consistency with related documents and the Law.

Following approval of this policy document, the Executive Manager, Office of the CEO (or a nominated delegate) is also responsible for ensuring that the implementation and communication plan is implemented and that all Council employees have access to the policy.

6. Related Documents

Legislation and References

- Local Government Act 2019 (NT)
- Local Government (General) Regulations (NT)
- Australian Taxation Office Taxation Determination Schedules

Policy documents

- Code of Conduct (Elected, Local Authority and Council Committee Members)
- Allowances and Expenses (Elected, Local Authority and Council Committee Members)
- Fatigue Management Policy
- Motor Vehicle Use Policy

Procedures

- Travel and Accommodation Procedures
- Vehicle Management Procedures

Instructions, tools, guidelines, forms and templates

- Accommodation and Travel Expenses Reimbursement Form

