

Elected members expenses, facilities and support policy

Policy No. 0017.100.E.R

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline expenses that can be reimbursed, and facilities and support provided to Elected Members to enable them to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2019* (NT).

2 Scope

This policy applies to all Elected Members in performing and discharging their official functions and duties in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2019* (NT).

3 Policy statement

Elected Members are entitled to be paid allowances, provided with the facilities necessary for them to be able to effectively carry out the role of an Elected Member, and be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred as a result of performing the role of an Elected Member.

3.1 Elected Member allowances

Each year the Minister for Local Government determines the maximum allowance rate.

Council will pay all Elected Members the following allowances as per Remuneration Tribunal Report and Determination No.1 of 2023:

- Councillor Allowance
- Extra Meeting Allowance
- Professional Development Allowance
- Vehicle Allowance

City of Darwin will assess all claims made by Elected Members against the eligibility requirements detailed in the Ministerial Determination.

The submission of correct forms, with complete and accurate information in a timely manner is a necessary precursor to the timely transfer of funds to Elected Members.

To support Elected Members to complete the administrative tasks relating to allowances, detailed guidance will be provided annually for reference. Document 0017.001.I.N Ordinary Elected Member Expenses Guideline 2023/24 and document 0017.002.I.N. Deputy Lord Mayor Expenses Guideline 2023/24 outlines the eligibility criteria of the various allowance types, how to submit a claim and critical payment schedule dates.

Elected Members are to complete an allowance claim form on a monthly basis, on the approved allowance claim form and duly signed. This form is to be submitted no later than the second business day of the month, for the prior month. Allowances received in accordance with *Ministerial Determination*, will be paid no later than the fifth business day of the month.

Elected Members will be emailed remittance advice including the allowance type paid for that month, year to date total, deductions, net payment totals and list of any extra meetings for which an allowance was paid that month.

In the event of any published revisions to *Ministerial Determination*, the CEO will notify all Elected Members prior to the end of the next payment cycle and provide an updated version of the reference document.

3.1.1 Extra meeting allowance

Council will pay eligible Elected Members an extra meeting allowance in accordance with the Determination of the Remuneration Tribunal.

To be eligible for the payment the Elected Member must attend for at 75% of the duration of the meeting.

A maximum of two meetings per day may be claimed. The total 'extra meeting allowance' per financial year is capped.

3.2 Reimbursement of expenses

3.2.1 Travel expenses

Elected Members wishing to attend an activity such as a conference, workshop, seminar, or relevant training session incurring travel costs at Council's expense shall apply to the Chief Executive Officer for approval.

Elected Members travelling as a Council representative for business related activities will also apply to the Chief Executive Officer for approval. Where possible a Council resolution will be attached to the application.

All travel bookings will be made via the Councillor and Committees Support Officer who will book arrangements and maintain travel records including flights, accommodation, transfers and meals via Council’s contracted travel supplier. All attempts will be made to ensure pre-payment of all costs or other confirmed costs via a purchase order or tax compliant invoice.

Where costs are unable to be pre-paid prior to travel, Elected Members may seek reimbursement post travel using the form provided.

Elected Members will complete the daily travel calculator form to make a claim for daily allowances. If Elected Members receive a daily allowance in accordance with the Australian Taxation Office, then Elected Members are responsible for ensuring receipts are obtained and a claim made via their personal annual tax return.

Council will meet the cost of economy class flights for Elected Member and business class for the Lord Mayor or Acting Lord Mayor.

Flights will be booked utilising the best available carrier and times. If Elected Members accrue Frequent Flyer or Airlines Membership points as part of the Council travel, they are permitted to be retained for personal use by Elected Members.

Elected Members may request that flights be booked in business class but will be invoiced for the difference between the cost of the best available airfare and the cost of the business class fare at the time of making the booking. Where possible, Elected Members should make payment directly to Council’s travel supplier for the difference.

Should an Elected Member choose to change or alter a booking for personal reasons, the additional cost of changes will be met by the Elected Member.

Elected Members are entitled to book and claim for travel for themselves only, not for spouses, partners, or any other family members, however they may also travel and share accommodation at no extra cost to Council.

Officers will endeavour to process travel requests as quickly as possible, in order to take advantage of discounts and to access the widest range of flights and accommodation possible.

3.2.2 International travel

International travel by Elected Members requires a resolution of Council.

If an international flight exceeds 8 hours duration, Elected Members may be booked to travel business class.

Claims for expenses incurred for international travel, including international currency can be made upon return using the travel claim reimbursement forms provided.

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Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Electronic version current. Uncontrolled copy valid only at time of printing.

Elected Members are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of full costs of travel for travel approved by Council prior to travelling.

3.2.3 Travel insurance

Council has travel insurance arrangements in place that provides travel insurance cover to all Elected Members (and in some cases partners) on approved council business and professional development.

3.2.4 Meals and incidentals

Elected Members are entitled to claim reimbursement of expenses for all meals and incidentals incurred while undertaking Council business. Reimbursement will be in accordance with the Australian Taxation Office rules and guidelines and claimed via the reimbursement of expenses procedure.

The daily rates claimable are updated each year upon release from the Australian Taxation Office.

3.2.5 Partner/spouse travel and/or attendance at events

Elected Members may be accompanied by a spouse or partner at events where no additional expense is incurred by Council and the appropriate RSVP is made to the event organisers.

Where an Elected Member wishes to take their partner/spouse to paid events, or to accompany them during official travel, all expenses for the partner/spouse must be paid by the Elected Member.

The exception is when the invitation to attend the event formally invites the partner/spouse, such as to attend a gala dinner or awards ceremony where the invitation is to Lord Mayor and partner or Councillor and partner or where it is culturally required.

Event costs reimbursed must be for business related activities or to represent Council.

3.2.6 Hospitality costs

Elected Members will be reimbursed for reasonable hospitality expenses deemed necessary to represent Council.

3.2.7 Professional development

Elected Members are entitled to an annual professional development allowance. The maximum amount each year is set by the Minister. It may be utilised for activities including training courses or attendance at conferences/seminars/presentations.

Attendance at professional development must be pre-approved by the Chief Executive Officer using the appropriate forms.

Elected Members should seek to maximise the value to Council of this investment by sharing with peers their key learnings and insights gained during training courses and conferences.

Additionally, under the *Local Government Act 2019* (NT), governance or other mandatory training may be required to be undertaken by Elected Members. Generally, there will be an agreed timeframe for this to be completed within.

3.3 Provision of facilities

3.3.1 Elected member indemnity

Elected Members are provided certain protections from liability under the *Local Government Act 2019* (NT) when acting in good faith and within the standards laid out in the Code of Conduct.

Council is unable to provide an indemnity for Elected Members appointed by Council to the position of Director of external boards of management, or an external board of directors. Elected Members are encouraged to ensure that these organisations have appropriate insurance in place for Directors prior to joining any board.

3.3.2 Vehicles

The Lord Mayor will be offered a Council-provided executive level vehicle for personal and official use, as well as a fuel card, registration, and insurance. The Lord Mayor may choose to salary package a motor vehicle under a novated lease arrangement via a City of Darwin approved third party provider. No additional reimbursements or allowances are paid on salary packaged motor vehicles.

Where the Lord Mayor is not receiving a Council-provided vehicle they can receive a Vehicle Allowance. The Vehicle Allowance, which will be paid monthly is set as per the Remuneration Tribunal Report.

When attending events or functions in an official capacity representing Council, Elected Members have the option of:

- The provision of a private hire car
- Taxi costs reimbursed on provision of tax receipt
- Rideshare reimbursed on provision of a tax receipt*

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- Utilising their own vehicle and claim reimbursement of travel costs based on logbook evidence

It is the responsibility of Elected Members to ensure, prior to travel, that a rideshare driver is able to provide a receipt that meets the requirements of the Australian Taxation Office, including but not limited to the provision of an ABN and GST components.

Should Elected Members wish to use a rental car for attendance at longer events (multiple days) or to attend conferences, Chief Executive Officer pre-approval is required, and requests should be lodged via the Councillor and Committees Support Officer, in the same manner and using the same forms as other travel requests.

3.3.3 ICT support and maintenance

ICT support is available to Elected Members for Council supplied equipment. Council will not provide ICT support and maintenance for assets not owned or supplied by Council such as home ADSL/NBN connections.

ICT officers and the Councillor and Committees Support Officer will provide support to Elected Members to ensure access to Council’s network and business papers.

Elected Members will not be provided with an allowance or able to claim reimbursement for this service. It will be expended against Council’s operational budgets.

Elected Members will not be provided with an allowance or able to claim reimbursement for ICT Support and Maintenance of equipment not supplied by Council as the equipment is not deemed to be a Council asset.

Elected Members will be provided with a dedicated email address (with unlimited storage) for the purpose of attending to Council business and performing official duties and the role of an Elected Member. Elected Members must adhere to relevant legislation when communicating via the Council provided email address.

3.3.4 ICT hardware - computers and equipment

Elected Members may be provided with a laptop and computer equipment required to enable them to undertake their official duties. This will be provided for the term of office and should they not be re-elected or choose to resign during the term, must be returned to City of Darwin.

Or Elected Members may claim reimbursement of the cost of purchasing a laptop and computer equipment of their choice to enable them to undertake their official duties to an amount of no more than \$2,400 including GST. This is the maximum claimable amount for the term of office.

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3.3.5 Meeting space

City of Darwin will provide a meeting space for the exclusive use of Elected Members to undertake Council business. This Councillor meeting space is located at the Civic Centre, adjacent to the Chamber.

4 Definitions

Elected Members are the Lord Mayor and Councillors who are elected by the community - noting that the legislation makes clear distinctions between different categories of Elected Members for the purpose of allowances, benefits, facilities, and services.

5 Legislative references

Local Government Act 2019 (NT)

6 Procedures / Related documents

0094.100.E.R Elected Members Breach of Code of Conduct

0015.100.E.R Elected Members Protocols and Interactions

0017.001.I.N Ordinary Elected Member Expenses Guideline 2023/24

0017.002.I.N Deputy Lord Mayor Expenses Guideline 2023/24

7 Responsibility / Application

All Elected Members are responsible for ensuring they understand and adhere to this policy. The Chief Executive Officer (or delegated authority) is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented.