

TRAVEL AND CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Scope:

This Policy applies to:

- all local, intrastate, interstate and overseas conferences undertaken and/or attended by Rockhampton Regional Council employees and elected members as part of their official Council duties;
- accommodation associated with such attendance; and
- all official travel and other necessary incidental / out of pocket expenses associated with such attendance.

2. Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy is to establish clear guidelines for travel and accommodation arrangements for Council employees attending official Council business.

3. Reference (e.g. Legislation, related documents):

- Local Government Act 2009
- Local Government (Finance, Plans and Reporting) Regulation 2010
- Fringe Benefits Tax Act 1986
- Rockhampton Regional Council Policies:
 - Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors
 - Code of Conduct for Employees
 - Motor Vehicle Insurance Policy
 - Training and Development Policy
 - Entertainment and Hospitality Policy
 - Fleet Management Policy - Provision of Council Motor Vehicles
 - Purchasing Policy – Acquisition of Goods and Services
- Travel and Conference Attendance Procedure

4. Definitions:

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Approval Officer means the Chief Executive Officer, General Managers, Executive Managers and the Operations Manager Human Resources.

Chief Executive Officer means Chief Executive Officer of the Rockhampton Regional Council.

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 1
Version: 3
Review Date: March 2012

Conference means a destination, event, tour, seminar, conference or meeting attended by a Council Officer for professional development or other business related activities from which a benefit to Council is derived.

Council means Rockhampton Regional Council.

Employee means an employee of the Rockhampton Regional Council, including elected members.

Training means further education and development where a Certificate of Attainment is received.

Travel means the mode of transportation employed and the time incurred in the reaching of and return from a prescribed destination, event, tour, seminar, conference or meeting.

5. Context:

This Policy establishes clear guidelines for the attendance at conferences, meetings, seminars, courses, study tours and promotional tours and reimbursement of approved expenses at these events.

Council endeavours to provide the best possible service to employees who are travelling on behalf of Council, while ensuring, at all times, accountability of public moneys is maintained and that travel and conference arrangements are administered in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

All Council travel and conference arrangements are to be organised through Corporate Support (the only exception being travel organised by Personal Assistants for their Department's General Manager). No travel will be booked unless the appropriate Travel Proposal Form and conference registration form, if applicable, have been duly completed and approved. This also applies to non-Council personnel.

Consideration must be given by the Approval Officer to the value and benefit to Council of the topics on the conference agenda before deciding whether or not to approve registration.

A detailed description of the process for the booking of travel, accommodation and other requirements is identified in the Travel and Conference Attendance Procedure.

5.1 Travel and Accommodation Arrangements

5.1.1 Air Travel

All airline bookings are made with respect to convenience of scheduling, and where practical, to take advantage of discounted air fares. The standard of all air travel shall be economy class, other than where officers are required to travel on long range international flights and then only with the explicit approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 2
Version: 3
Review Date: March 2012

5.1.2 Accommodation

Accommodation will be booked taking into consideration availability, cost and proximity to business appointments. Wherever practicable, accommodation will be arranged at the conference or course venue. Where accommodation is not included in a package, the standard of accommodation shall be appropriately priced business class accommodation, i.e. 3 or 4 star accommodation or equivalent.

Any employees, should they wish, may consider share accommodation arrangements to further reduce costs.

5.1.3 International Travel

Council must approve all conference and course attendance where the venue is outside Australia. It is the responsibility of the applicant, supported by the Chief Executive Officer and Approval Officer, to ensure an appropriate committee agenda item is prepared in advance to ensure appropriate time is allowed for the approval process and consequent arrangements to be made.

Fees for traveller's cheques, visas, currency conversion, travel insurance and immunisation expenses shall be reimbursed by Council. Receipts must be submitted as supporting documentation.

5.1.4 Travel by Family Members

A Council employee may choose to have their partner and/or children travel with them to a conference, at the employee's expense.

Refer to Council's Travel and Conference Attendance Procedure.

5.1.5 Travel Insurance

All employees are covered by Council insurance while travelling on authorised Council business. Details of cover may be obtained from the Strategic Manager Administration and Technology. If the level of cover is considered by the traveller to be inadequate for their personal requirements, additional insurance can be obtained at the employee's expense.

Local Government WorkCare

Employees engaged in travel on authorised Council business, including intrastate, interstate or overseas travel are entitled to the statutory protection of WorkCare, as in the normal course of employment.

Cover is extended to employees for the full duration of the employee's absence from the normal place of work, but excludes personal/recreational activities of a high-risk nature outside the normal course of employment.

5.1.6 Frequent Flyer Programs

Council employees must not accumulate frequent flyer points for personal gain as a result of travel in the course of employment unless otherwise allowed in a contract of employment.

Family members whose travel has been booked by Council, may only add their frequent flyer details to the booking once all costs are paid in full.

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 3
Version: 3
Review Date: March 2012

5.2 Allowable Expenditure

Allowable expenses for seminar, conference, course, promotional tour attendance will include:

5.2.1 Motor Vehicle

Use of private motor vehicles is not encouraged and should only be utilised where no other means of transport is available, practical or economical. The Chief Executive Officer or Approval Officer shall approve the use of a private vehicle to attend a conference, course etc in advance.

Where an employee utilises his or her own vehicle to attend a conference, course etc the employee shall be entitled to a travel allowance in accordance with the employee's award. The distance travelled and the starting and ending speedometer readings shall be detailed on the appropriate claim form. The use of private vehicles for Council business will only be acceptable where every effort to use Council vehicles has been explored in advance of its required need. It should be noted that Council insurance does not cover private vehicles used for Council business.

5.2.2 Vehicle Hire

Vehicle hire for conference use may be requested on the Travel Proposal Form.

5.2.3 Parking and Associated Fees

Where a vehicle incurs parking fees and the like for an employee to attend a conference, course etc the cost will be reimbursed by Council (excluding infringement notices). Supporting receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

Please ensure that a receipt is requested at the time of payment. This receipt is required for reimbursement.

5.2.4 Public Transport/Taxi Fares

The cost of travel for legitimate Council business, conference, meeting, seminar etc will be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

Cabcharge vouchers are available from Corporate Support and may be requisitioned as part of the overall travel requirements.

Airtrain tickets are recommended to be used where available and appropriate.

Council will not cover public transport/taxi fares for personal matters, i.e. shopping, visiting friends/relatives, etc.

5.2.5 Laundry/Dry Cleaning

Laundry/dry cleaning may be claimed for travel of four (4) consecutive days and will only be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

5.2.6 Business Telephone Calls, Facsimiles and Postage

Official business telephone calls, modem and internet connections, facsimiles and correspondence, photocopying and postage are allowable and will be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 4
Version: 3
Review Date: March 2012

5.2.7 Personal Telephone Calls and Calls from Mobile Phones

Council recognises the personal sacrifice of travelling for Council business and the impact it has on family life. In recognition of this, personal calls per day will be allowed to a maximum of \$15.00.

Reimbursement of Prepaid Mobile Telephone expenses will be at the discretion of the original Approval Officer.

5.2.8 Meals

The cost of meals, if not included as part of the conference/seminar/accommodation package, is allowable up to:

- Breakfast \$25.00
- Lunch \$30.00
- Dinner \$50.00

These allowances are to be utilised independently for each meal type per day and not to be added together for one meal.

Should the employee choose not to attend a provided dinner/meal, then the full cost of the alternative meal shall be met by the employee.

No alcohol will be reimbursed by Council.

5.2.9 Purchase of Conference Proceedings

Purchase of conference proceedings, papers, audio or CD/DVD is permissible where the information is deemed valuable to convey information about the conference content that could not be conveyed as well by other means.

5.2.10 Other Expenses

Any additional costs not covered by this Policy are to be fully substantiated and claimed upon return. Receipts or declarations of all expenditure incurred are to be provided on the appropriate form.

5.3 Non Allowable Expenditure

- Alcohol
- Alcoholic drinks, snacks and other costs associated with the mini bar will not be paid for by Council, except for soft drinks and bottles of water, which will be permitted to a maximum of two (2) non-alcoholic drinks from the mini bar each day
- Tips and gratuities
- Applying for or renewing passports
- Airline club fees other than approved by the Chief Executive Officer (i.e. Qantas Frequent Flyer or Virgin Blue Velocity Club)
- Excess baggage claims
- Toiletries
- Barber or hair stylist
- Babysitting fees
- Kennel fees
- Tourism related costs
- Reading materials
- Traffic parking fines

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 5
Version: 3
Review Date: March 2012

- Travel costs not applicable to the conference/approved event
- In-flight and in-house movies
- In-house or external entertainment not directly related to the conference/approved event
- Personal gifts, goods or services purchased
- Costs incurred for partners (including children):
 - meals
 - travel
 - incidentals, e.g. laundry, in-house video hire
 - partner's programme
- Should travel time be extended by the employee for personal reasons beyond what is necessary for the purposes of the authorised travel, all additional costs will be the responsibility of the traveller.

As a guide, expenses not normally reimbursed at home, will not be reimbursed when travelling.

5.4 Reporting Policy

5.4.1 Traveller's Report

Within two (2) weeks of return, a verbal or written report should be prepared by the employee. The report should include:

- (i) period of travel
- (ii) places visited
- (iii) objectives of the visit
- (iv) benefits gained from the travel, both for the individual and the organisation.

The reports should be presented to:

| Traveller | Reports to |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chief Executive Officer | The Mayor/Council |
| General Manager | Chief Executive Officer |
| Council Employee | Manager/Approval Officer |

5.4.2 Annual Report Requirements

All arrangements for travel, accommodation and conference registration have to be completed by Corporate Support. The only exception is for Personal Assistants booking travel for their Department's General Manager.

Corporate Support must be advised of all travel costs booked by the Department's Personal Assistant via a standard template, which will then be included in a quarterly report to be presented to Council.

The quarterly reports will then be compiled for inclusion in Council's Annual Report.

6. Evaluation Process:

This Policy is reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related information is amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by Council.

Notwithstanding the above, this Policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than two years.

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 6
Version: 3
Review Date: March 2012

7. Responsibilities:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Sponsor | Chief Executive Officer |
| Business Owner | Chief Executive Officer |
| Policy Owner | Chief Executive Officer |
| Policy Compliance | Governance and Innovation |

8. Changes to Policy:

This Policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

**EVAN PARDON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

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Policy No.: POL.A2.2/Page 7
Version: 3
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