



This is an official copy of the **Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Policy** of **Mornington Shire Council**, made in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2012 and Local Government Regulation 2012, Public Records Act, Mornington Shire Council’s Local Laws, Subordinate Local Laws and current Council Policies.

The Councillors Expenses Reimbursement Policy is a Statutory Policy.

Statutory policies are prepared in response to legislative requirements and mandate employee behaviour. This Policy is approved by the Mornington Shire Council for the guidance of Council and Council staff.

DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL			
VERSION	DATE	RESOLUTION NO.	DETAILS
V1	21/06/2017	2017/110	Responsible Officer Chief Executive Officer Description Statutory Policy
V2	18/07/2018	2018/126	Responsible Officer Executive Manager Governance and Communication Description Statutory Policy
V3	15/07/2020	2020/114	Responsible Officer Executive Manager Governance and Communication Description Statutory Policy
V4	26/10/2022	2022/190	Responsible Officer Executive Manager Governance and Communication Description Statutory Policy
V5	18/05/2025	2025/80	Responsible Officer Director Corporate & Community Description Statutory Policy
Review Date: April 2028			



Objective

This Policy sets out specific guidelines for the payment of Reasonable Expenses incurred, or to be incurred by Councillors for discharging their duties and responsibilities as Councillors and the provision of facilities to Councillors for that purpose.

Scope

This Policy is adopted pursuant to s 249-252, *Local Government Regulation 2012* (Qld).

This Policy applies to all Councillors including the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Mornington Shire Council.

Policy Statement

Definitions

Council means Mornington Shire Council.

Council Business means the official business conducted on behalf of, and approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business continuity for the Council. Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local government area. Participating in unrelated community events or boards that are not associated with Council will not be regarded as Council Business.

Council Resolution means a resolution passed by simple majority at a General Meeting of Council.

Councillors include the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

Council-Owned Assets means any item of equipment provided by Council at Council's expense to a Councillor to assist in the effective discharge of their official duties.

Expense means payments made by Council to reimburse Councillors for their reasonable expenditure incurred or to be incurred when discharging their duties as Councillors. These payments are not regarded as remuneration. Expenses may be either reimbursed to Councillors or paid direct by Council for something that is deemed a necessary cost or charge when performing their roles.

Private Use means the use of Council-Owned Assets or Council funds for any uses other than uses directly related to Council Business.

Professional Development means any facilitated learning opportunity including, but not limited to conferences, workshops, seminars, or training events provided by a government department or professional association, membership of or subscriptions to relevant professional or industry associations or journals, and purchase of relevant published reference materials including books and journals.

Reasonable and **Reasonably** means Council must make sound judgements and consider what is prudent, responsible, and acceptable to its community when determining reasonable levels of facilities and expenditure. The community expects limits and will not tolerate excessive use or abuse of public funds.



Reimbursed and **Reimbursement** means payments made to a Councillor for actual Expenses already incurred.

Policy

(a) Entitlement

- Councillors are elected representatives of the community who undertake the role of setting the strategic direction of the Mornington Shire. It is Council's responsibility to ensure that Councillors are not financially disadvantaged when carrying out the requirements of their role.
- Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking Council Business during the Councillor's term of office as that period is described in sections 159 and 160 of the *Local Government Act 2009*.
- Councillors are entitled to make claims to Council for reimbursement of expenses, except to the extent that the expenses are expressly prohibited by this policy or in statute.
- The types of reasonable expenses that may be incurred by Councillors while carrying out Council Business may include, but are not limited to:
 - travel Expenses including accommodation, meals, transport and incidentals
 - conference and seminar expenses; and
 - entertainment and hospitality expenses,subject to the terms and conditions outlined in this policy.
- The Mayor will be provided with a Council credit card for uses associated with Council Business in accordance with Council's Credit Card Policy.
- Councillors will be provided with Council owned assets to assist Councillors in undertaking their duties in accordance with this policy.

(b) Requests for Reimbursement of Council Business Expenses

- All claims for Council business expenses must be submitted monthly to the Chief Executive Officer.
- The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for determining the payment of any request for reimbursement and when payment is made.
- Requests for reimbursement of expenses will only be considered where appropriate documentation is provided to show that the Expense was incurred by the Councillor while undertaking official duties for genuine Council Business.

(c) Determination

- In deciding on a claim for reimbursement of expenses, Council must act in the public's interest, consider whether the expense meets the community's expectations, and whether the expense could not have been avoided. Council is required to be accountable and transparent in meeting a request for reimbursement of expenses.



- Councillors will not be reimbursed for any claimed expense where a Councillor stands to financially benefit from the claim personally.
- Councillors may be reimbursed for reasonable incidentals in accordance with this policy and up to the maximum provided for in guidelines published by the Australian Taxation Office from time to time.

(d) Professional Development

- Councillors are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development. Council will alert professional development activities to Councillors, and Council will cover all costs associated with reasonable professional development activities.
- Where Councillors wish to attend professional development activities such as seminars or conferences which are organised by a government agency or industry body, Council will cover the costs of registration, travel, accommodation, and meals where Council considers that the professional development activity is reasonable, and the activity is directly associated with the Councillor's portfolio.
- Where Councillors wish to attend other professional development as a personal pursuit, campaigning or for personal development that is not directly related to their Council portfolio, all costs are payable by the Councillor from their own personal funds.
- Requests by Councillors to attend conferences, seminars or other professional development activities must be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer and must outline the details of the event and the benefits for Mornington Shire Council, considering any professional development budget allocation for each Councillor.
- Councillors are discouraged from applying to attend conferences, seminars or other professional development on Council meeting or committee sitting dates.
- The Chief Executive Officer will make the decision whether to approve the professional development.
- The Corporate and Community division will keep a register of all conferences, seminars and other Professional Development activities attended by Councillors. A copy of the register will be made available to all Councillors at least every six months.

(e) Travel Expenses Generally

- All travel Expenses outside of the Far North Queensland Local Government Area must be approved by way of Council resolution.
- Where Councillors are officially appointed as a Council representative on a committee or with an association, all travel and accommodation expenses incurred as part of the Councillor's official committee or member duties or obligations are deemed to be approved without Council Resolution.



- Requests by Councillors to attend events, conferences, seminars, or training must be in writing to the Chief Executive Officer outlining the details of the event, the cost, and the benefits to the Mornington Shire.
- Requests for travel must be made in sufficient time to obtain approval from the Chief Executive Officer.
- It is in public interest for Council to take advantage of travel discounts and deals wherever possible so as to reduce expenditure on travel costs for Councillors. All requests for travel must be made in sufficient time to allow Council to take advantage of any discounts or deals available.
- Where Councillors must engage in air travel for Council Business, and approval has been provided for the travel, the Councillor must travel economy class and must travel by the most direct route, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Chief Executive Officer prior to making the booking.

(f) Meals and refreshments at official local events

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for the reasonable cost of meals and refreshments when attending official events related to Council business within the Far North Queensland Local Government Area.

(g) Meals during domestic or international travel

Councillors will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, associated with Council business, where:

- the Councillor incurs the cost of the meal personally;
- the meal was not provided within registration costs of the approved activity, event, or travel;
- the Councillor can produce original documents sufficient to verify the actual meal cost; and
- the cost of the meal is reasonable in the circumstances.

(h) Accommodation during domestic or international travel

- Where practical, Council will book accommodation that is offered as part of a conference package.
- Where it is unreasonable for the Councillor to return home for the night, Councillors are entitled to stay in accommodation when undertaking professional development or Council business.
- Where accommodation is required, Council will book and pay for all accommodation expenses under this Policy.
- Where a Councillor chooses to stay with family or friends while travelling for official Council Business, no accommodation Expenses will be paid or reimbursed.



(i) Hospitality and Entertainment

- Councillors may be eligible for reimbursement of the costs of up to \$100.00 per event for hosting a meal or refreshments for conference delegates, sponsors, or business guests where the hosting is for a Council business related purpose only.
- This expense is additional to delegation costs incurred by Council administration.
- All other hospitality or entertainment expenses must be paid out of the Councillor's discretionary funds in accordance with section 109 of the *Local Government Act 2009*. and Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Policy.

(j) Parking, tolls, public transport and vehicle hire

- Councillors may be reimbursed for parking and any costs associated with travel by public transport where such costs are incurred while undertaking approved professional development or Council business.
- Council will cover reasonable costs for tolls and other charges associated with toll roads.
- The Chief Executive Officer may seek to recover the cost of tolls and other charges from Councillors from time to time should it become apparent that the costs incurred are not Reasonable.
- Councillors are discouraged from vehicle hire unless public transportation, private transfers, taxi transportation or other reasonable transportation is not available. Where the Chief Executive Officer approves vehicle hire, the vehicle hire will be arranged and paid for by Council prior to the conference, seminar, or event. Any hire vehicles will be standard hire vehicles and must be value for money for Council and the community

(k) Vehicle allowance

Council-owned vehicles are available for use by Councillors in accordance with Council's Vehicle Policy.

(l) Mobile telephones

- One mobile telephone device and phone plan will be provided to each Councillor at the beginning of the Council term for the primary purpose of conducting Council business.
- The model provided is to be in accordance with the hardware bundle approved for Councillors by the Chief Executive Officer.
- Reasonable private use of Council mobile telephones is accepted.
- Where a plan limit is exceeded, unless the cost can be justified as a genuine business cost, the cost will be deemed as a private use expense and the Councillor must reimburse Council for any balances exceeding the plan limit.



(m) Laptop computers

- One laptop computer will be provided at the beginning of the Council term for the purpose of conducting Council Business.
- The model provided is to be in accordance with the hardware bundle approved for Councillors by the Chief Executive Officer.
- If the laptop computer provided to a Councillor breaks or is damaged, the laptop computer will be sent to the contracted supplier for repair. During the period of repair, the Councillor will be provided with a temporary replacement laptop computer which will be provided by the contracted supplier. The temporary replacement laptop computer must be returned to Council as soon the Councillor's laptop computer is repaired.

(n) Exclusions

- **Private Use**
Any costs incurred which are deemed to be private use are required to be paid by the Councillor from private funds. Non-exhaustive examples of Private Use in respect of travel include:
 - tourism activities and tours;
 - social events;
 - in-flight and in-house movies;
 - mini bar purchases;
 - airline lounge, club or frequent flyer membership fees;
 - entertainment;
 - personal items or services;
 - excess luggage costs;
 - any costs associated with the return of forgotten personal items;
 - laundry or dry cleaning services (excluding international travel); and/or
 - alcohol.
- **Family member travel**
 - Councillors shall not be reimbursed for any expenses incurred for spouses, partners or other family members travelling with the Councillor.
 - Where Council incurs expenses in relation to family member travel, Councillors must reimburse Council the full amount of the expense.
 - Where a Councillor's family member is specifically invited to attend Federal, State or Local Government endorsed events, Councillors shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred for family members discharging their official duties on behalf of Council.
- **Transport**
Valet parking fees, traffic offences, parking fines, or other motor vehicle fines will not be Reimbursed.
- **Advertising**
All advertising undertaken by a Councillor which solely or primarily contains a Councillor's image and name is deemed to be for electioneering purposes.



Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds, services, or facilities for advertising purposes.

- **General meals**

Councillors are not entitled to free meals, beverages or other food from Council's facilities including canteens, cafes, and sports facilities. Councillors are sufficiently remunerated under legislation and are expected to pay for all of their own meals using their personal funds.

- **Alcohol**

Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

- **Raffles and Donations**

Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for participation in raffles or donations.

(o) Asset ownership - facilities and equipment

- All facilities and equipment provided to Councillors to undertake their duties as a Councillor remain the property of Council and must be accounted for during Council's audits.
- Councillors are expected to look after all facilities, equipment and resources provided to them responsibly and be mindful that these are publicly funded.
- All information stored on facilities, equipment and resources provided to Councillors remains the property of Council at all times.
- Council will cover all ongoing maintenance costs associated with Council facilities, equipment, and resources to ensure that it is operating for optimal professional use, subject to proper usage and standards of care.
- All facilities, equipment and resources must be returned to Council in fair condition either:
 - prior to the completion of the Councillor's term in accordance with section 160 of the *Local Government Act 2009*, at a date and time reasonably requested by the Chief Executive Officer;
 - no later than the close of business on the day following the end of the Council term in accordance with section 160 of the *Local Government Act 2009*; or
 - immediately if a Councillor is suspended under section 182A of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

(p) Insurance cover

Councillors will be covered under Council insurance policies while discharging their duties as a Councillor.



(q) Related Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*

(r) Related Documents

- Advertising Spending Policy (*s 197 Local Government Regulation*)
- Councillor Code of Conduct published by the Queensland Government
- Credit Card Policy
- Entertainment and Hospitality Policy (*s 196 Local Government Regulation*)
- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy
- Vehicle Policy

(s) Policy Requirements

This document replaces the previous Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Policy V4 dated 26 October 2022.

Variations

Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

Gary Uhlmann
Chief Executive Officer