

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION EXPENSES POLICY

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1. OBJECTIVE

To ensure that Councillors and Employees are provided with appropriate travel and accommodation expenses when travelling on official Council business.

This policy does not apply to contractual professional development entitlements.

2. PRINCIPLES

This policy is to provide guidelines as to the eligibility to claim travel and accommodation expenses when attending City related functions, conferences, courses or meetings.

Direct costs of attending approved events generally will be covered by the City. Expenditure incurred of a personal or private nature will not be covered by the City and will be at the cost of the Councillor or Employee.

The person making the booking must ensure that the most competitive rates are utilised when booking airfares and accommodation.

The below procedures may not consider all factors associated with travel and accommodation expenses. In this case, the CEO may determine what is appropriate on a case-by-case basis and such decision remains final.

3. POLICY

3.1 Approvals

3.1.1 Councillors

In respect to travel by Councillors, approval must be sought from the CEO in advance of any bookings. The CEO will take into consideration annual allocations provided to Councillors for professional development and available funds remaining for the individual Councillor.

3.1.2 Chief Executive Officer

In respect to attendance at conferences by the CEO, approval must be sought from the Mayor in advance of any bookings. Due consideration shall be given to the CEO's negotiated contract for professional development opportunities and available funds remaining for the CEO.

3.1.3 Other Employees

In respect to attendance at conferences/courses by Employees, approval must be sought in advance of any bookings by completing Form CH-11-1 *Application to Attend a Conference or Course*.

Travel by Directors and all interstate/international travel is to be approved by the CEO.

All other travel is to be approved by the relevant Director. Consideration shall be given to professional development opportunities identified for Employees within their development plans, available budgets, and the overall training needs of the wider organisation

3.2 Bookings

The most cost-effective travel arrangements should be used at all times with the booking of concessional fares being pursued where available. Government rates are to be utilised where available and appropriate.

No amendments are to be made after the booking has been confirmed except with the approval of the Director or CEO as appropriate. This ensures that there is an audit trail of bookings.

Employees and Councillors are responsible for making their own arrangements with regards to accommodation, car hire etc. for personal use. No personal arrangements are to be made by the DAO / booking officer.

3.2.1 Travel

This policy only covers direct travel to and from the destination.

Air Travel

Air travel shall be based on "economy" class of a commercial air carrier. Any upgrade in travel class shall be at the expense of the Councillor or Employee. Where an Employee or Councillor is booked on a flight (sector) with a duration of 5 hours or longer, they can elect to upgrade to an exit row seat (if available) at the City's expense. Air travel costs will include passenger bookings, departure and arrival taxes where applicable, insurance on cancellations and baggage claims.

The Employee or Councillor is responsible for providing the correct information when booking air travel.

Accompanying persons travelling with the Councillor or Employee will not be covered by the City. Payment for such persons will be at the cost of the Councillor or Employee.

Road Transport

Where air travel is not available, a City vehicle is to be used to travel to the destination.

Where air travel is an option but the preference is to drive, this arrangement will require approval of the CEO or the Director (whichever is relevant) prior to the travel being undertaken. Consideration will be given to the costs of travel, time and accommodation.

Reimbursement of fuel will only be provided for private vehicle usage when a City vehicle is not available. Substantiation of costs is necessary to obtain this reimbursement. No mileage rates will apply in these instances.

"Cab Charge" or "Taxi Vouchers" will be provided by the City for taxi fares that are attributable to business purposes.

In all other circumstances, a hire car can be arranged and may be used only on days when there is City business for distances that require the use of the hire car. The onus is on the Councillor or Employee to substantiate why hiring a car may be necessary in circumstances where this may not be clear.

Where a hire car is approved, the Councillor or Employee is responsible for ensuring the vehicle is refuelled prior to returning the vehicle to the hire car company. Unless there is a compelling reason, any costs associated with failing to return the vehicle to the hire car company refuelled will be at the Councillor or Employees expense.

3.2.2 Accommodation

Commercial or private accommodation is to be met by the City for those days that the Councillor or Employee requires accommodation because the travel cannot be completed in one day.

Commercial Accommodation

Where the purpose of the travel is being held at a venue that provides for accommodation, the accommodation shall be booked at that venue at the prevailing government rate. For travel to a major City the maximum rate for accommodation is \$180 per day. For regional travel the maximum rate for accommodation is \$200 per day. If the accommodation rate exceeds the applicable amount, approval will be required by the CEO/Director to confirm the booking.

Subject to relative cost, accommodation should be booked in as close proximity to the function, conference, course or meeting as possible. This ensures that the use of external travel options are minimised. Councillors and Employees are encouraged to use public transport or walk to the function, conference, course or meeting wherever possible.

Accompanying persons travelling with the Councillor or Employee may be included in the accommodation booking, however if an upgrade is required for additional bedding configurations, the Councillor or Employee will be required to reimburse the Council for the cost differential.

Hotel parking will be covered by a purchase order, where possible, if a City vehicle or hire vehicle is used.

Private Accommodation

The daily rate for accommodation involving an overnight stay at private accommodation is \$75.00. This is an allowance provided if the Councillor or Employee wishes to stay with family or friends in lieu of commercial accommodation.

3.2.3 Meal Allowances

A reimbursement to a maximum of \$115 per day for the Councillor or Employee's own meals will be provided subject to production of itemised tax receipts based on the following rates:

- Breakfast: maximum \$30;
- Lunch: maximum \$30;
- Dinner: maximum \$55.

With the exception of inflight meals, reimbursement will not be available where meals are supplied.

Where the Councillor or Employee incurs a meal expense less than the permitted maximum, the difference may not be taken up as part of another meal, or used to purchase further good or beverage items at a later time.

3.2.4 Incidentals

Incidentals including public transport, taxi fares and telephone calls attributable to business purposes will be reimbursed on provision of satisfactory proof of expenditure. Use of a mini-bar facility or purchase of accommodation services, for example, movies, gym and personal services shall be at the cost of the Councillor or Employee.

No incidentals will be covered that are incurred by a third party including any family member or friend travelling with the Councillor or Employee.

3.3 Tacking on of Leave

The Councillor or Employee will be required to pay any difference in the costs of travel and accommodation arising from the change of dates otherwise than required for the travel.

If an employee wishes to "tack on" leave (i.e. ATOs/RDOs, TIL, Annual Leave, Personal Leave, Long Service Leave) they will be required to meet 50% of all flight costs incurred by the City. The amount of leave "tacked on" by an Employee shall not exceed the duration of the attendance to the business that is the subject of the trip plus one day for travel (e.g. for a 2 day conference, no more than 3 days leave can be added).

These arrangements can only be made if operational requirements allow and if the Employee has sufficient leave accrued. Leave must be approved in accordance with the Leave Policy.

If an Employee 'tacks on' any extra days at the end of the work related event, and return to the City would not be possible that day (e.g. no flights available after the engagement ends), the employee is entitled to meal reimbursement up to the end of the day the engagement ceased and a taxi fare to return directly to the accommodation from the conference/training venue. No other meal or taxi reimbursements are applicable after the engagement ends.

If an Employee 'tacks on' any extra days prior to the beginning of the work related event, and it would not be possible to get the employee to the engagement on the day of the engagement prior to commencement, the employee is entitled to a meal reimbursement the night prior to the engagement. The entitlement to taxi fares commences the morning of the engagement.

3.4 Substantiation of Expenditure

Documentary evidence in the form of receipts is required from the Councillor or Employee for the substantiation of all expenditure within 14 days of returning from travel.

Should fringe benefits tax be incurred by the Council, it shall be borne by the Councillor or Employee concerned.

3.5 Corporate Credit Card Holders

Holders of a Council credit card are expected to pay for meals and incidental expenses using the corporate credit card subject to the limits detailed within section 3.2.3 of this policy. Normal substantiation rules apply.

4. MISCELLANEOUS

If the training or conference is cancelled the airfares and accommodation may be cancelled or utilised for other City travel.

If travel duration exceeds seven (7) days in total, the CEO may deem it appropriate to cover the Employee or Councillor under a specific travel insurance policy.

5. CONSEQUENCES

This policy represents the formal policy and expected standards of the City of Karratha. Appropriate approvals need to be obtained prior to any deviation from the policy. Elected Members and Employees are reminded of their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct to give full effect to the lawful policies, decisions and practices of the City.

6. REFERENCES TO RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Form CH-11-1 "Application to attend a Conference or Course"
- Form CH-11-2 "Checklist for Travel & Accommodation"
- "Payment Request Form" (For employee to claim reimbursement)
- "Debtors Invoice Request Form" (For Council to claim reimbursement from employee)

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Responsible Officer:	Manager Human Resources

This Policy takes effect from the date of adoption by Council and shall remain valid until it is amended or deleted.