



NAMBUCCA VALLEY COUNCIL PAYMENT OF EXPENSES AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES TO COUNCILLORS POLICY No: G 06

Our Vision

Nambucca Valley ~ Living at its best

Our Mission Statement

'The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people.'

1.0 Policy objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enable the reasonable and appropriate reimbursement of expenses incurred by Councillors while undertaking their civic duties
- enable facilities of a reasonable and appropriate standard to be provided to Councillors to support them in undertaking their civic duties
- ensure accountability and transparency in reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities to Councillors
- ensure facilities and expenses provided to Councillors meet community expectations
- support a diversity of representation
- fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities.

2.0 Related legislation

Relevant legislation and guidance:

- *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*, Sections 252 and 253
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*, Section 403.

3.0 Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this policy.

Term	Definition
appropriate refreshments	Means food and beverages, excluding alcohol, provided by council to support Councillors undertaking official business
Act	Means the <i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)</i>
clause	Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a clause is a reference to a

	clause of this policy
Code of Conduct	Means the Code of Conduct adopted by Council or the Model Code if none is adopted
Councillor	Means a person elected or appointed to civic office as a member of the governing body of council who is not suspended, including the mayor
General Manager	Means the General Manager of Council and includes their delegate or authorised representative
long distance intrastate travel	Means travel to other parts of NSW of more than three hours duration by private vehicle
maximum limit	Means the maximum limit for an expense or facility provided in the text and summarised in Appendix 1
official business	Means functions that the Mayor or Councillors are required or invited to attend to fulfil their legislated role and responsibilities for council or result in a direct benefit for Council and/or for the local government area, and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings of Council and committees of the whole • meetings of committees facilitated by Council • civic receptions hosted or sponsored by Council • meetings, functions, workshops and other events to which attendance by a councillor has been requested or approved by Council
professional development	Means a seminar, conference, training course or other development opportunity relevant to the role of a councillor or the mayor
Regulation	Means the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 (NSW)</i>
year	Means the financial year, that is the 12 month period commencing on 1 July each year

4.0 Policy Content

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The provision of expenses and facilities enables Councillors to fulfil their civic duties as the elected representatives of Nambucca Valley Council.
- 4.1.2 The community is entitled to know the extent of expenses paid to Councillors, as well as the facilities provided.
- 4.1.3 The purpose of this policy is to clearly state the facilities and support that are available to Councillors to assist them in fulfilling their civic duties.
- 4.1.4 Council staff are empowered to question or refuse a request for payment from a Councillor when it does not accord with this policy.
- 4.1.5 Expenses and facilities provided by this policy are in addition to fees paid to Councillors. The minimum and maximum fees a council may pay each councillor are set by the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal as per Section 241 of the Act and reviewed annually. Council must adopt its annual fees within this set range.

4.2 Principles

4.2.1 Council commits to the following principles:

- **Proper conduct:** Councillors and staff acting lawfully and honestly, exercising care and diligence in carrying out their functions.
- **Reasonable expenses:** providing for Councillors to be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred as part of their role as Councillor.
- **Participation and access:** enabling people from diverse backgrounds, underrepresented groups, those in carer roles and those with special needs to serve as a Councillor.
- **Equity:** there must be equitable access to expenses and facilities for all Councillors.
- **Appropriate use of resources:** providing clear direction on the appropriate use of Council resources in accordance with legal requirements and community expectations.
- **Accountability and transparency:** clearly stating and reporting on the expenses and facilities provided to Councillors.

4.3 Scope

4.3.1 Private or Public Benefit

4.3.1.1 Councillors must not obtain private or political benefit from any expense or facility provided under this policy.

4.3.1.2 Private use of Council equipment and facilities by Councillors may occur from time to time. For example, telephoning home to advise that a Council meeting will run later than expected. Such incidental private use does not require a compensatory payment back to Council.

4.3.1.3 Councillors should avoid obtaining any greater private benefit from Council than an incidental benefit. Where there are unavoidable circumstances and more substantial private use of Council facilities does occur, Councillors must reimburse the Council.

4.3.1.4 Campaigns for re-election are considered to be a political benefit. The following are examples of what is considered to be a political interest during a re-election campaign:

- production of election material
- use of Council resources and equipment for campaigning
- use of official Council letterhead, publications, websites or services for political benefit
- fundraising activities of political parties or individuals, including political fundraising events.

4.3.2 Expenses

4.3.2.1 General expenses - All expenses provided under this policy will be for a purpose specific to the functions of holding civic office. Allowances for general expenses are not permitted under this policy. Expenses not explicitly addressed in this policy will not be paid or reimbursed.

4.3.2.2 General travel arrangements and expenses - All travel by Councillors should be undertaken using the most direct route and the most practicable and economical mode of transport. Each Councillor and the Mayor may be reimbursed as per the table for General Travel Expenses and Professional Development for travel expenses incurred while undertaking official business or professional development or attending approved conferences and seminars within NSW. This includes reimbursement:

- for public transport fares
- for the use of a private vehicle or hire car
- for parking costs for Council and other meetings
- for tolls
- by Cabcharge card or equivalent
- for documented ride-share programs, such as Uber, where tax invoices can be issued.

Allowances for the use of a private vehicle will be reimbursed by kilometre at the rate contained in the Local Government (State) Award.

Councillors seeking to be reimbursed for use of a private vehicle must keep a log book, recording the date, distance and purpose of travel being claimed. Copies of the relevant log book contents must be provided with the claim.

4.3.2.3 Interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses - Council will scrutinise the value and need for Councillors to undertake overseas travel. Councillors should avoid interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate trips unless direct and tangible benefits can be established for the Council and the local community.

Total interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses for all Councillors will be prohibited unless specifically approved by a Council resolution.

Councillors seeking approval for any interstate and long distance intrastate travel must submit a case to, and obtain the approval of, the General Manager and a full Council meeting prior to travel.

Councillors seeking approval for any overseas travel must submit a case to, and obtain the approval of, a full Council meeting prior to travel. The case should include:

- objectives to be achieved in travel, including an explanation of how the travel aligns with current Council priorities and business, the community benefits which will accrue as a result, and its relevance to the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties
- who is to take part in the travel
- duration and itinerary of travel
- a detailed budget including a statement of any amounts expected to be reimbursed by the participant/s.

For interstate and long distance intrastate journeys by air of less than three hours, the class of air travel is to be economy class. For interstate journeys by air of more than three hours, the class of air travel may be premium economy. For international travel, the class of air travel is to be premium economy if available. Otherwise, the class of travel is to be economy.

Bookings for approved air travel are to be made through the General Manager's office. For air travel that is reimbursed as Council business, Councillors will not

accrue points from the airline's frequent flyer program. This is considered a private benefit.

4.3.2.4 Travel expenses not paid by Council - Council will not pay any traffic or parking fines or administrative charges for road toll accounts.

4.3.2.5 Accommodation and meals - In circumstances where it would introduce undue risk for a Councillor to travel to or from official business in the late evening or early morning, reimbursement of costs for accommodation and meals on the night before or after the meeting may be approved by the General Manager. This includes where a meeting finishes later than 9.00pm or starts earlier than 7.00am and the Councillor lives more than 50 kilometres from the meeting location.

Council will reimburse costs for accommodation and meals while Councillors are undertaking prior approved travel or professional development outside the Mid North Coast. The daily limits for accommodation and meal expenses within Australia are to be consistent with those set out in Part B Monetary Rates of the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, as adjusted annually. The daily limits for accommodation and meal expenses outside Australia are to be determined in advance by the General Manager, being mindful that Councillors will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages.

4.3.2.6 Refreshments for council related meetings - Appropriate refreshments will be available for Council meetings, Council committee meetings, Councillor briefings, approved meetings and engagements, and official Council functions as approved by the General Manager. As an indicative guide for the standard of refreshments to be provided at Council related meetings, the General Manager must be mindful of Part B Monetary Rates of the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, as adjusted annually.

4.3.3 Professional development

4.3.3.1 Council will set aside \$10,000 per Councillor and \$14,000 for the Mayor in its budget over the four year term of Council, to facilitate professional development of Councillors through programs, training, education courses and membership of professional bodies.

4.3.3.2 In the first year of a new Council term, Council will provide a comprehensive induction program for all Councillors which considers any guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government (OLG). The cost of the induction program will be in addition to the ongoing professional development funding.

4.3.3.3 Annual membership of professional bodies will only be covered where the membership is relevant to the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties, the Councillor actively participates in the body and the cost of membership is likely to be fully offset by savings from attending events as a member.

4.3.3.4 Approval for professional development activities is subject to a prior written request to the General Manager outlining the:

- details of the proposed professional development
- relevance to Council priorities and business
- relevance to the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties.

4.3.3.5 In assessing a Councillor request for a professional development activity, the General Manager must consider the factors set out in Clause 4.3.3.4, as well as the cost of the professional development in relation to the Councillor's remaining budget.

4.3.4 Conferences and seminars

4.3.4.1 Council is committed to ensuring its Councillors are up to date with contemporary issues facing council and the community, and local government in NSW.

4.3.4.2 Council will set aside a total amount of \$10,000 per Councillor and \$14,000 for the Mayor in its budget over the four year term of Council, to facilitate Councillor attendance at conferences and seminars. This allocation is for all Councillors. The General Manager will ensure that access to expenses relating to conferences and seminars is distributed equitably. Note:- this is not additional funding to that identified for professional development.

4.3.4.3 Approval to attend a conference or seminar is subject to a written request to the General Manager. In assessing a Councillor request, the General Manager must consider factors including the:

- relevance of the topics and presenters to current Council priorities and business and the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties
- cost of the conference or seminar in relation to the total remaining budget.

4.3.4.4 Council will meet the reasonable cost of registration fees, transportation and accommodation associated with attendance at conferences approved by the General Manager. Council will also meet the reasonable cost of meals when they are not included in the conference fees. Reimbursement for accommodation and meals not included in the conference fees will be subject to Clauses 4.3.2.5 and 4.3.2.6.

4.3.5 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) expenses

4.3.5.1 Council will provide an allowance to Councillors for expenses associated with appropriate ICT devices and services up to a limit of \$960 per annum for each Councillor. This may include mobile phones and tablets, mobile phone and tablet services and data, and home internet costs.

4.3.6 Special requirement and carer expenses

4.3.6.1 Council encourages wide participation and interest in civic office. It will seek to ensure Council premises and associated facilities are accessible, including provision for sight or hearing impaired Councillors and those with other disabilities.

4.3.6.2 Transportation provisions outlined in this policy will also assist Councillors who may be unable to drive a vehicle.

4.3.6.3 In addition to the provisions above, the General Manager may authorise the provision of reasonable additional facilities and expenses in order to allow a Councillor with a disability to perform their civic duties.

4.3.6.4 Councillors who are the principal carer of a child or other elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family member will be entitled to reimbursement of carer's expenses up to a maximum of \$2,500 per annum for attendance at official business, plus reasonable travel from the principal place of residence.

4.3.6.5 Child care expenses may be claimed for children up to and including the age of 16 years where the carer is not a relative.

4.3.6.6 In the event of caring for an adult person, Councillors will need to provide suitable evidence to the General Manager that reimbursement is applicable. This may take the form of advice from a medical practitioner.

4.3.7 Home office expenses

Councillors will not be reimbursed for costs associated with the maintenance of a home office, such as minor items of consumable stationery and printer ink cartridges.

4.3.8 Insurances

4.3.8.1 In accordance with Section 382 of the ~~Local Government~~ Act, Council is insured against public liability and professional indemnity claims. Councillors are included as a named insured on this Policy.

4.3.8.2 Insurance protection is only provided if a claim arises out of or in connection with the Councillor's performance of his or her civic duties, or exercise of his or her functions as a Councillor. All insurances are subject to any limitations or conditions set out in the policies of insurance.

4.3.8.3 Council shall pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim accepted by Council's insurers, whether defended or not.

4.3.8.4 Appropriate travel insurances will be provided for any Councillors travelling on approved interstate and overseas travel on council business.

4.3.9 Legal assistance

4.3.9.1 Council may, if requested, indemnify or reimburse the reasonable legal expenses of:

- a Councillor defending an action arising from the performance in good faith of a function under the ~~Local Government~~ Act provided that the outcome of the legal proceedings is favourable to the Councillor
- a Councillor defending an action in defamation, provided the statements complained of were made in good faith in the course of exercising a function under the Act and the outcome of the legal proceedings is favourable to the Councillor
- a Councillor for proceedings before an appropriate investigative or review body, provided the subject of the proceedings arises from the performance in good faith of a function under the Act and the matter has proceeded past any initial assessment phase to a formal investigation or review and the investigative or review body makes a finding substantially favourable to the Councillor.

4.3.9.2 In the case of a code of conduct complaint made against a Councillor, legal costs will only be made available where the matter has been referred by the General Manager to a conduct reviewer and the conduct reviewer has commenced a formal investigation of the matter and makes a finding substantially favourable to the Councillor. For example, expenses arising from an investigation as to whether a Councillor acted corruptly would not be covered by this section.

4.3.9.3 Council will not meet the legal costs:

- of legal proceedings initiated by a Councillor under any circumstances
- of a Councillor seeking advice in respect of possible defamation, or in seeking a non-litigious remedy for possible defamation
- for legal proceedings that do not involve a Councillor performing their role as a Councillor.

4.3.9.4 Reimbursement of expenses for reasonable legal expenses must have Council approval by way of a resolution at a Council meeting prior to costs being incurred.

4.3.10 Expenses Summary

4.3.10.1 Additional costs incurred by a Councillor in excess of these limits are considered a personal expense that is the responsibility of the Councillor.

4.3.10.2 Councillors must provide claims for reimbursement within two months of an expense being incurred. Claims made after this time cannot be approved.

4.3.10.3 Detailed reports on the provision of expenses and facilities to Councillors will be publicly tabled at a Council meeting annually by way of inclusion in Council's Annual Report and published in full on Council's website. This report will include expenditure summarised by individual Councillor and as a total for all Councillors.

4.3.10.4 In relation to conferences and seminars, where such costs are paid by Council and the Councillor does not attend the conference or seminar the Councillor shall be personally liable to repay to Council all non-refundable amounts paid by Council. Where the Councillor believes there are extenuating circumstances for non-attendance the Councillor may apply to Council to have such repayment waived.

4.3.10.5 The main expenses and facilities are summarised in the table below. All monetary amounts are exclusive of GST.

Expense or facility	Maximum amount	Frequency
General travel expenses	Councillors will be reimbursed for travelling to and from meetings of Council or meetings of any committee of Council or meetings of any organisation to which a Councillor has been appointed as a delegate or any other activity which has been authorised by Council. Travel by private motor vehicle will be reimbursed at the kilometre rate applicable in the Local Government (State) Award.	Two-Monthly
Interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses	Not applicable.	Per year
Accommodation and meals	As per the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, adjusted annually	Per meal/night
Professional development	\$10,000 per Councillor and \$3,500 \$14,000 for the Mayor over the four year term of Council, in its budget except where a resolution of Council allows these budget limits to be exceeded.	As stated in maximum amount field
Conferences and seminars	Included in professional development.	Per year
ICT expenses	\$960	Per year paid monthly
Carer expenses	\$2,500 per Councillor	Per year
Council vehicle and fuel card	Councillors, excluding the Mayor, can only obtain incidental private benefit from the provision of a motor vehicle for official use. The Mayor is allocated a Council vehicle and fuel card under an agreement for private use of motor vehicle. Councillors other than the Mayor are to make arrangements with the General Manager for the use of a Council vehicle for official use.	Not relevant

Expense or facility	Maximum amount	Frequency
Furnished office	Provided to the Mayor	Not relevant
Number of exclusive staff supporting Mayor and Councillors	General Managers discretion	As approved by General Manager
Payment of Superannuation to Councillors	As per the Superannuation Guarantee Levy	Monthly

4.3.11 General Facilities for all Councillors

4.3.11.1 Facilities - Council will provide the following facilities to Councillors to assist them to effectively discharge their civic duties:

- personal protective equipment for use during site visits
- a name badge which may be worn at official functions, indicating that the wearer holds the office of a Councillor and/or Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

Councillors may book meeting rooms for official business in a specified Council building at no cost. Rooms may be booked through a specified officer in the Mayor's office or other specified staff member.

The provision of facilities will be of a standard deemed by the General Manager as appropriate for the purpose.

4.3.11.2 Stationery - Council will provide the following stationery to Councillors each year:

- letterhead, to be used only for correspondence associated with civic duties
- business cards

4.3.11.3 Administrative support - Council will provide administrative support to Councillors to assist them with their civic duties only. Administrative support may be provided by a member of Council's administrative staff as arranged by the General Manager or their delegate. As per Section 4.3.1, Council staff are expected to assist Councillors with civic duties only, and not assist with matters of personal or political interest, including campaigning.

4.3.12 Additional facilities for the Mayor

4.3.12.1 Council will provide to the Mayor a maintained vehicle to a similar standard of other council vehicles, with a fuel card. The vehicle will be principally supplied for use on business, professional development and attendance at the Mayor's office and the Mayor will have an agreement for private use of the motor vehicle at no cost to the Mayor.

4.3.12.2 Council will provide the Mayor with a furnished office incorporating a computer configured to Council's standard operating environment, telephone and meeting space.

4.3.12.3 In performing his or her civic duties, the Mayor will be assisted by a small number of staff providing administrative and secretarial support, as determined by the General Manager.

4.3.12.4 The number of exclusive staff provided to support the Mayor and Councillors will be at the General Managers discretion

As per Section 4.3, the staff approved by the General Manager to assist the Mayor are expected to work on official business only, and not for matters of personal or political interest, including campaigning.

5. Related Procedures or Documents

- Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for Mayors and Councillors in NSW, 2009
- Local Government Circular 17-17 Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy - Template
- Policy No G 20 - Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Procedure No G 01 – Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct
- Procedure No G 11 – Payment of Expenses and Provisions of Facilities for Councillors

6.0 History

Department:	Corporate Services	Last Reviewed	Resolution Number
Policy Category	Council	31 Aug 2017	436/17
Endorsed By:	General Manager	11 Oct 2018	481/18
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