
Travel and Related Expenses Policy

CONTROL:

Policy Type:	Financial
Authorised by:	Council
Head of Power:	Local Government Act 2009 Local Government (Finance, Plans and Reporting) Regulation 2010.
Responsible Officer:	Governance and Environment Manager
Adopted / Approved:	November 15 2021, Minute No. 2021.11.15-OM-7
Last Reviewed:	October 2021
Review:	September 2022 Review every year when the tax office releases new determination.
Version:	7

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE:

This policy seeks to ensure consistency, accountability and transparency in the payment of travel and related expenses.

1.2 POLICY OBJECTIVES:

To provide employees with guidelines regarding expenses incurred when travelling on official business.

1.3 COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY:

This Policy will commence on adoption. It replaces all other specific Travel and Related Expenses policies of Council (whether written or not).

2. POLICY

2.1 CONTEXT:

This policy applies to all employees of Diamantina Shire Council. It does not apply to Councillors, contractors, volunteers, and other Council representatives. The Expense Reimbursement – Councillors Policy provides guidelines for the reimbursement of Councillors expenses.

This policy does not apply to situations where staff are directed to stay in a Council provided camp as this is addressed under the relevant Award and the Human Resources Policy.

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3. STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 SPECIFIC AND STANDARD

When a council officer travels on official business and it is expected that travel and related expenses will be incurred, the officer must seek prior permission from their Manager before embarking. At all times council officers must remember that they are representing Council and must be prudent in their use of public funds and that their behaviour must be in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Travel should be via the most efficient, time and cost effective method. Any variation to this specifically requested by the employee may not be fully paid for by Council. Where an employee wishes to vary the most efficient, time and cost effective itinerary, for personal reasons they will need to arrange and purchase the varied flights, car rentals, accommodation privately and then request reimbursement from Council. Council will pay up to a maximum equivalent to the amount that would have been payable for the most efficient, time and cost effective manner.

Should a situation outside the scope of this policy be encountered it is expected that travel arrangements are made in the spirit of the guidelines below and Manager approval is sought before embarking.

Claims for reimbursement of expenses must be authorised by the Manager and will be made via electronic transfer by the Finance and Administration Branch to the officer's account.

3.1.1 Approval for travel

- Prior to booking or embarking on travel outside of the Diamantina Council area, where travel or related expenses are likely to be incurred, officers must gain written approval from their Manager using the Travel Request form. Where travel is required to attend training, a conference, or other event an Training and Other Event Request form must be completed and approved first.

3.1.2 Booking Travel

- All travel bookings are to be made through the Executive Assistant.

3.1.3 Meals

Travel outside of the Diamantina Shire Council area:

- Whilst on official pre-approved Council business and where an officer is away from their usual place of work **and** outside the Diamantina Shire Council area during the hours specified below, the following meal expenses may be claimed, subject to the maximum dollar threshold:-

MEAL	REQUIREMENT
Breakfast	Away during full period - 7:00am and 9:00am
Lunch	Away during full period - 12:00pm to 2:00pm
Dinner	Away during full period - 5:00pm to 7:00pm

Examples:

- The officer leaves home to travel to Mt Isa at 7.30am; breakfast cannot be claimed.

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- The officer departs their usual place of work at 8.30am to attend a meeting in Boulia and returns to their workplace at 3.00pm the same day; lunch costs can be claimed so long as a meal was not provided as part of the meeting.
- The officer departs Boulia at 5.30pm and arrives home at 7.30pm dinner cannot be claimed.

Exclusions

- Should a meal/s be provided to the officer as part of their duties, for example a meal at a conference or on a flight, the officer is not entitled to claim for meal expenses.
- Reimbursement will not be provided for beverages/snacks between meals, however the cost of non-alcoholic beverages will be reimbursed if included in a claim for reimbursement for meal expenses in accordance with the table above.

Travel within the Diamantina Shire Council area:

- Meal costs may be claimed within the Diamantina Shire Council area in limited circumstances with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer. For example if it is operationally convenient for an officer to be located at another service centre involving an overnight stay.
- Council employees are not able to claim meal expenses for lunch if they travel to another service centre as part of their work.

Meal Reimbursement Rates

- Officers will be reimbursed in accordance with Appendix A up to the maximum value of the meal expense rate. Should the cost of an officer's meal exceed this rate, the officer is responsible for the additional expense unless prior approval has been granted by the officer's Manager or there are extenuating circumstances which can be proved to Council's satisfaction. For example, the cost of an officer representing Council at an awards dinner. Council will only reimburse costs for non-alcoholic beverages.
- If an officer is staying at accommodation where meals, for example breakfast, can be included in the accommodation package and the rates are reasonably close to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) rate at Appendix A, it is acceptable to book and prepay for meals at the same time as booking accommodation. The rates listed at Appendix A will be updated annually.
- Tipping expenses will not be reimbursed.

Payment of Meal Expenses

- Payment of meal expenses can be made the following ways:
 - Reimbursement of meal expenses will occur upon completion of the travel and the submission of an approved Payment Request Voucher form including receipts to

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Accounts Payable. The funds will be paid into the officer's account. This is the preferred method.

- Payment of actual expenses on an officer's corporate credit card. If an officer holds a corporate credit card with a category 2 or 3 use authorisation as outlined in the Corporate Credit Card Policy, the officer may charge meals up to the value of the allowance to their corporate credit card. The officer is responsible for providing receipts for reconciliation. If an officer chooses to pay for meals via corporate credit card, the employee may only claim up to the maximum amount for that particular meal as per the attached schedule. This maximum amount is not to be 'balanced out' across all meals due to Australian Taxation Office requirements. The officer is not to pay for meals for accompanying people on the corporate credit card unless that person is a council officer. Should the cost of the meals exceed the meal expense limit, the officer is responsible for the additional expense and this amount must be paid back immediately to Council upon return from travel.
- Payment direct to a supplier. If meals are included as part of a package an employee is not entitled to claim meal expenses. For example meals are included as part of a conference package/flight.

Payment using a Councillor's corporate credit card

- If an officer is travelling with a Councillor, the officer's meals or other expenses are not to be paid for using the Councillor's corporate credit card.

3.1.4 Accommodation

Accommodation Bedourie and Birdsville

- If employees who normally work in Birdsville are required to overnight in Bedourie they will stay in the Council Spa View Motel Units. If the Spa View Motel Units are fully booked then standard accommodation available at the Bedourie Royal Hotel or the Simpson Desert Oasis will be used.
- If employees who normally work in Bedourie are required to overnight in Birdsville they will stay in the Birdsville Lodge or the Birdsville Tourist Park. If a camp is not available for Works employees on the 10/4 roster then the SES Dongas will be used.
- Facilities Maintenance staff may use vacant houses as accommodation if there is ongoing work in Birdsville. In this situation staff shall ensure that they leave the premises in clean and tidy condition.
- Where meals are not provided or reimbursed and the Camp Allowance as detailed in the Human Resources Policy is not applicable, an Inter-town allowance of \$30 will be paid for each night in lieu.

Accommodation Standard

- Council officers are to be provided with accommodation that is at least consistent with the 3 or 4 star rating used in RACQ accommodation (i.e. well-appointed establishments offering a comfortable standard of accommodation) except where this standard is not available at a particular locality.

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- If the accommodation is provided as part of a package (e.g. for training/conference or competitive rates negotiated with a higher rated establishment), council officers may seek approval from their Manager to stay at higher rated accommodation.

Accommodation Cost

- Council officers should choose accommodation up to the maximum price in accordance with Appendix A. Should 3 or 4 star accommodation not be available at the rate in the attached schedule, officers may seek approval from their Manager to purchase higher cost accommodation.

Private Accommodation

- Should an officer choose to stay in private accommodation (e.g. with friends or family) the officer is not entitled to claim costs for accommodation.

Upgrading of Accommodation

- Should an officer choose to upgrade their accommodation (e.g. to a higher rated property or to a larger suite to accommodate family) the officer is responsible for paying the upgrade cost difference.

3.1.5 Babysitters/Childminding

- Council will not pay for the cost of babysitting/childminding unless:
 - Both the child's parents are council officers and are required to travel on official duty that is not optional. This would not apply if the officers were attending professional development; or
 - The officer is a single parent and is required to travel on official duty and this was not stipulated in the officer's position description. This would not apply if the officer was attending professional development.
- If an officer requires child minding or babysitting assistance, this will be organised on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

3.1.6 Parking

- Council will reimburse the officer for reasonable parking expenses upon submission of the employee Payment Request Voucher form. If possible, council will also pay for parking as part of an accommodation, training or conference package.
- Council will not pay for valet parking unless valet parking was the only type of parking available or comparatively economical and provided good value to Council. Any expenses incurred for valet parking outside of these parameters is the responsibility of the officer.

3.1.7 Hire Car

- Bookings for hire car or other vehicles will be made using Avis, through their Local Buy contract. Insurance coverage is not required to be taken out.

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- Transport arrangements to collect and drop off the hire car at the beginning or end of a trip are the employee's responsibility. For example no taxi fares will be paid from home to work in order to collect a hire car.

3.1.8 Private Car

- Under normal circumstances Council does not allow the use of private vehicles for work related travel either as a driver or passenger. However, in exceptional circumstances, where a Council vehicle is not available a private vehicle may be used with mileage to be reimbursed at ATO rates. On occasions where private vehicles are used for council business the employee should be aware that, in the event of any accident, all claims must be covered by the employee's own insurance on their vehicle. Council's insurance does not cover vehicles not owned by Council. Approval by the officer's manager needs to be given on each and every occasion where a private vehicle is being used for council business.
- If an officer chooses to travel by private vehicle when attending an approved event (such as training, conference, trade show) the officer must receive prior approval on a Training and Other Event Request Form for any reimbursement or allowance for the cost of travel.

3.1.9 Fuel

- Council officers should use a council vehicle for travel and fuel will be purchased using the vehicle's fuel card. If an officer requires fuel for a Council vehicle and is in a location where fuel is not able to be purchased using a fuel card, the expense can be paid for using a corporate credit card if the officer has a category 2 or 3 use authorisation as outlined in the Corporate Credit Card Policy, or reimbursement for the fuel expenses can be claimed upon submission of the receipt and Payment Request Voucher form.
- When refuelling a hire vehicle, the expense can be paid for using a corporate credit card if the officer has category 2 or 3 use authorisation or reimbursement can be claimed upon submission of the receipt and Payment Request Voucher form.

3.1.10 Taxi

- Should an officer need to travel by taxi reimbursement of actual expenses can be made in the following ways:
 - Presentation of receipts and Payment Request Voucher form.; or
 - Corporate credit card if the officer has category 2 or 3 use authorisation.
- In some circumstances, officers may find it is more economical and convenient to use public transport or hire a car.

3.1.11 Public transport (excluding air travel and long distance bus and train travel)

- Should an officer need to travel by public transport, reimbursement of actual expenses can be made in the following ways:

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- Presentation of receipts and Payment Request Voucher form.; or
- Corporate credit card if the officer has category 2 or 3 use authorisation.

3.1.12 Long distance train and bus travel

- Booking may be made directly with suppliers with the arrangement that provides best value to Council being selected. Payment may be made by purchase order or by corporate credit card if the officer has authorisation for category 2 or 3 use as defined in the Corporate Credit Card Policy.

3.1.13 Air Travel

Flight selection

- Where possible, flights should be booked in advance to take advantage of “early-bird” specials. The best value fare from the quotes must be selected taking into consideration factors such as time of travel, flexibility starting time of conference/training and conditions associated with airfare.
- Regional Express run a REX Community Fares Scheme. Under this scheme, Rex Community Fares (Rex Promo) are available for early-bird sales up to 30 days prior to departure (advance purchase is 60 days for all Queensland regulated routes) subject to Community Fare availability. Please note: Community Fares are strictly subject to availability during the advance purchase period, and may sell out.

For last minute purchases within 24 hours before departure time, all remaining unsold seats are then released at the Community Fare (Rex Promo) fare level. This is subject to remaining seat availability.

- For less travelled routes such as Bedourie/Birdsville to Mt Isa where there is always likely to be seat availability the last minute fares may be used.

Fare class

- It is expected that council officers should travel on an economy class airfare. If an employee is travelling to a destination further than 2.5 hours flight duration, preference should be given to bookings on full service airlines and extra leg room seat may be booked.
- Other fare classes may be considered if an officer has a medical condition or there are other compelling circumstances upon approval from the Chief Executive Officer.

Optional Baggage Allowance

- Officers should ensure that the airfare booked includes a baggage allowance if required. Purchasing and paying for a baggage allowance in advance is cheaper than purchasing the same allowance at check-in.

Meals

- The cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages purchased for a meal during a flight may be reimbursed upon submission of the receipt and Payment Request Voucher form to Accounts Payable.

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- Should the airfare include meals during the flight, the officer will not be eligible for reimbursement for meal expenses for the duration of the flight.

Booking and payment

- Airfare bookings will be made by the Executive Assistant by corporate credit card.

Accompanying family members/associates

- If an officer chooses to be accompanied by a family member or associate when travelling, the airfare for this person should be booked and paid for separately outside of Council processes. Flights for accompanying family members or associates cannot be booked and paid for using a corporate credit card.

Excess baggage

- Should an officer incur charges for excess baggage of a personal nature, the officer is responsible for these costs. For bulky materials or equipment for council business these items should be couriered or posted prior to departure if possible.

Frequent flyer points/loyalty program benefits

- Council will not pay for membership to frequent flyer or loyalty programs.

Airline lounge/corporate club membership

- Council will not pay for airline lounge entry/access or corporate club membership without prior approval from the Chief Executive Officer. If an officer holds an annual membership, this membership will only be renewed with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

Extending of travel period

- If an officer elects to extend a trip the officer will be required to pay any differences in airfares compared to the dates/times of when they would normally have departed/returned. To seek approval to extend a trip the officer must provide their Manager with evidence of the airfare rates and pay any difference. If cost of the airfare is lower as a result of extending the trip, Council will not pay the difference to the officer.

Travel Insurance

- Should travel insurance be required for domestic travel, this is to be arranged on a case-by- case basis with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer. Travel insurance must be organised for international travel.

3.1.14 Illness or injury whilst travelling

- If an officer becomes ill whilst travelling they are to notify their Manager as soon as possible. Once the illness has been confirmed, the officer will commence on sick leave in accordance with Council's Human Resource Policy if required. Council may then make arrangements for the officer's accommodation and transport so they can be returned to their normal place of residence in the Diamantina region.
- In the event of an injury in addition to the above, the officer is to contact Council's Safety and Quality Coordinator as soon as possible.

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3.1.15 Communication Expenses

Work related communication

- Council officers should in the first instance use a council mobile telephone for work related telecommunications. Should an officer not have access to a council mobile telephone, reasonable costs for telephone calls, internet usage, faxes, printing, postage etc can be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

Private Communication

- When travelling on official business council officers may use a council mobile telephone as per Council's Information Technology Policy. If an officer does not have a council mobile telephone, reasonable call expense can be claimed upon submission of receipts and an expense claim form.

3.1.16 Incidental Expenses

- Council recognises that employees travelling on official business overnight may incur additional expenses. Should incidental expenses be incurred, these expenses will be considered for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis upon submission of receipts and a Payment Request Voucher form.

3.1.17 Advance Payment

- Generally actual expenses are reimbursed through Accounts Payable upon submission of receipts and a Payment Request Voucher form. In exceptional circumstances, advance payments may be made on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer. If an advance payment is made, all expenditure must be reconciled and receipts submitted at the completion of the travel. Any unused funds must be returned to Council.

3.1.18 Overseas Travel

- Overseas travel is to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Council will also pay for the following:
 - Travel insurance
 - Visa fees (including medical fees if required as part of a visa application)
 - International exchange fees (cost of exchanging money)
- If an officer is travelling to a country where corporate credit card is not readily used, the officer may take cash in the appropriate currency with them, upon approval from the Chief Executive Officer. All receipts must be provided to Council upon return and the amounts reconciled. If the officer travels to a country where tipping is customary and not included on receipts, the officer must keep a note of these expenses and show that only reasonable costs were incurred. Any additional expenses will only be paid, with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

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3.1.19 Submission of claims

- Please send reconciled receipts together with the approved Training and Other Event Request form and the Payment Request Voucher form to Accounts Payable.

4. REFERENCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 DEFINITIONS:

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Word / Term	Definition
Council	means Diamantina Shire Council.
Meals	Breakfast, lunch or dinner (and associated non-alcoholic beverages consumed with that meal) but excludes other meals and beverages that may be consumed at other times of the day (eg. morning or afternoon tea).
Manager	A managerial position identified in the organisational chart. This may or may not be your supervisor.
Officer	Includes all Council employees

4.2 RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS:

Links to supporting documentation
Expenses Reimbursement – Councillors Policy
Code of Conduct
Corporate Credit Card Policy
Information Technology Policy
Entertainment and Hospitality Expenses Policy
Payment Request Voucher form
Event Attendance Request form
Travel Request form

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4.3 VERSION CONTROL:

Previous Version Number	Adopted/Approved Date
1 (Original)	July 20 2015, Minute No. 2015.07.20-OM-19
2	October 10 2016; Minute No. 2016.10.10-OM-15
3	December 20 2017; Minute No. 2017.12.20-OM-5
4	December 17 2018;Minute No. 2018.12.17-OM-13
5	January 20 2020; Minute No. 2020.01.20-OM-11
6	April 12 2021, Minute No. 2021.04.12-OM-13

APPENDIX A

[Taxation Determination 2021/6 – What are the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts for the 2021-22 income year?](#)