

1. Policy intent

- 1.1 Tablelands Regional Council recognises Council Officers and Councillors (referred together as “staff” for the remainder of this document) may need to undertake travel intrastate, interstate and on occasion overseas in the course of Council business. Council is committed to ensuring that travel and related services are procured as cost effectively as possible.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to:
 - a. Identify how and what genuine travel and accommodation expenses incurred by staff in the performance of official duties will be reimbursed or paid by Council.
 - b. Ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred or to be incurred by staff.
 - c. Ensure facilities provided to assist staff to carry out their travel and accommodation related duties are reasonable.
- 1.3 Ensure that all travel and accommodation activities comply with Council Policies and Council’s legal and legislated obligations.
- 1.4 Travel and travel related expenses may only be claimed for reimbursement for reasonable expenses related to the business activities of the Tablelands Regional Council.
- 1.5 While staff are permitted to travel with other people such as family members, all costs associated with their travel will not be paid for by the Tablelands Regional Council.
- 1.6 On approval of a General Manager, staff that require assistance with travel and living duties due to a disability, are permitted to travel with an accompanying person at Council’s expense for all reasonable travel and travel related expenses.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all travel and accommodation undertaken by the Mayor, Councillors and Council Officers (referred together as “staff” for this document, or individually as Councillors or Council Officers) in the course of their duties as employees of the Tablelands Regional Council.

3. Background / supporting information

3.1 Background

This policy is to provide a set of guidelines that are intended to:

- 3.1.1 ensure clear and consistent understanding of policy requirements;
- 3.1.2 ensure compliance by Council with all legal and regulatory obligations;
- 3.1.3 ensure the best use of travel funds and enable Council to better manage its annual travel budget; and
- 3.1.4 support staff while conducting Council business away from the normal workplace.

3.2 Supporting information for this policy includes:

- 3.2.1 Councillor Remuneration, Expenses Reimbursement and Resources Policy.
- 3.2.2 Entertainment and Hospitality Policy.
- 3.2.3 Local Government Act 2009.
- 3.2.4 Local Government Regulation 2012.
- 3.2.5 Procurement Policy
- 3.2.6 Code of Conduct
- 3.2.7 Gifts Benefits and Interests Policy
- 3.2.8 Use of Employee Private Vehicle for Council Related Business Policy
- 3.2.9 Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003
- 3.2.10 Training Approval Advice

4. Policy statement

Travel expenses will be paid by Council if they are reasonable and necessarily incurred while undertaking approved official travel and are appropriately documented and within the guidelines of this policy. Reimbursement for travel expenses should be on a cost recovery basis within budgetary limits.

Travel and Accommodation Approval and Bookings

4.1 Councillor Travel Authorisation

Each Councillor is allocated a budget per financial year for travel, accommodation and registration fees to attend conferences, seminars and other business activities while representing the Tablelands Regional Council. Each Councillor may utilise this budget as they see fit without seeking additional approval, excluding overseas travel noted below in 4.12, providing the following conditions are met:

- 4.1.1 Notification of attendance must be provided to the Mayor, Councillors and Chief Executive Officer as soon as practicable so arrangements can be made for any absences.
- 4.1.2 Where attendance by a Councillor involves formal voting on behalf of Council, that attendance must be approved by Council Resolution.
- 4.1.3 Where a Councillor (other than the Mayor and Deputy Mayor) is to attend a meeting to formally represent Council (for example, a meeting with a Minister or Director-General), that attendance must be approved by the Mayor.
- 4.1.4 Council must by resolution, expressly agree to pay reasonable expenses for a spouse/partner or accompanying person where a function is of a formal or ceremonial nature and it is considered that a spouse/partner or accompanying person be reasonably expected to attend.

4.2 Council Officer Travel Authorisation

- 4.2.1 Travel outside of the Tablelands Regional Council region, excluding overseas travel noted below in 4.12, is to be approved by a Manager or General Manager and comply with the following conditions:
- a. Be within budget constraints and financial delegation.
 - b. Where possible, travel will be undertaken during normal business hours.
 - c. It is acknowledged that attendance at meetings, conferences, training etc. is of mutual benefit for both Council and the Employee. As such, any training provided outside of working hours may be accrued as TOIL or paid at applicable rates as agreed with the Supervisor, Manager or General Manager.
- 4.2.2 For travel within the Tablelands Regional Council region, that utilises Council vehicles during normal business hours for normal business duties, no additional approval is required.
- 4.2.3 For travel within the Tablelands Regional Council region, that is outside of business hours, not in a Council Vehicle or not for regular business activities of the staff member, approval must first be given by the Supervisor, Manager or General Manager.
- 4.2.4 For business related travel expenses paid for by staff, reimbursements will be provided in accordance with the requirements stated below in 4.11.
- 4.2.5 Travel and accommodation for externally funded projects or for external consultants to Council must be approved in accordance with the financial delegation of the project. The travel arrangements should be completed by the project officer with all expenses allocated to the relevant project.

4.3 Information sharing

Following the attendance at any Council business event, information obtained must be shared with staff that have an interest in the topic of the event which is relevant to Council business and/or the local community.

4.3.1 Awards

- 4.3.1 Coupons, cash, prizes, denied boarding compensation or other forms of refund of company expenses are and remain the property of the Council.
- 4.3.2 Gifts or prizes received shall be declared in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and the Gifts Benefits and Interests Policy.

Travel

4.4 Cost Effectiveness

Staff travelling for Council business must:

- 4.4.1 Exercise the same care in incurring expenses as they do in their day to day duties at Council complying within budget constraints and financial delegations.;
- 4.4.2 Seek the best value for all business travel arrangements made. Staff may choose to upgrade their travel arrangements but this is strictly at the personal expense of staff; and
- 4.4.3 Make arrangements for travel and related bookings as soon as possible after the approval for travel has been given to secure discounted rates where applicable.

4.5 Travel Bookings

- 4.5.1 For Councillors, all travel bookings and event attendance must be booked by the Mayors Personal Assistant. These bookings include all conference registration fees, official lunches, dinners and associated tours where they are relevant to the business and interest of Council.
- 4.5.2 For Council Officers, all travel bookings are the responsibility of each Officer to arrange. Council Officers without a purchase card may organise payment by another Officer with a purchase card or utilise purchase orders.
- 4.5.3 A purchase order or purchase card shall be used for all travel expenditure. Some purchase cards may need to be unblocked to allow travel expenses to be booked to them. To unblock a purchase card, Accounts Payable are to receive this request via an email with Manager approval at least three days prior to the travel transactions.
- 4.5.4 For staff traveling with a purchase card it is preferred that the purchase card is used for all business travel related expenses. Tax invoice receipts must be collected to reconcile the purchase card transactions.
- 4.5.5 Cab Charge vouchers are to be obtained from the Accounts Payable Officers or Financial Accountant.
- 4.5.6 As agreed with the Supervisor, Manager, General Manager or Chief Executive Officer, staff may travel and stay at the required location a day prior to the event, and or a day after the event taking into consideration the location and timing the event start and finish times and required travel at the cost of Council.
- 4.5.7 While staff may choose to extend their stay for personal reasons (for example, instead of returning home on Friday staff return on Sunday) all additional costs incurred for an extended stay are at the personal expense of staff.
- 4.5.8 Staff are not to collect personal reward points for any travel or accommodation related expenses paid for by Council.
- 4.5.9 Travel Insurance will be arranged on an as needs basis. Advice should be obtained on insurance needs for staff travelling overseas.

4.6 Class of travel

- 4.6.1 The least expensive class of travel available will be used for all staff unless specially approved by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.6.2 Staff may choose to upgrade their travel arrangements but this is strictly at their own personal expense.
- 4.6.3 Exceptions to the use of the least expensive service are allowed:
- a. when such service is not available at the required time and flights at other times cannot meet the trip requirements; or
 - b. if there is a possibility the trip may need to be rescheduled to another date.

4.7 Accommodation and Meals

- 4.7.1 Accommodation for Councillors should be arranged through the Mayor's PA or CEO's PA.
- 4.7.2 Where staff do not have a company credit card, an arrangement to provide a purchase order should be made with the accommodation venue to charge accommodation and applicable meal expenses back to Council.
- 4.7.3 Council will pay for an appropriate standard of accommodation at reasonable rates and acknowledges the economic and practical benefits of being accommodated at the venue of the event to be attended.
- 4.7.4 Council will meet reasonable costs, to a maximum determined by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for reasonable costs of main meals, for any main meal that is not provided as part of the conference or accommodation. As a guide, for the 2018-19 financial year, the maximum amount per main meal is:

Meal	2018/19 Maximum Reimbursement Amount
Breakfast	\$27.55
Lunch	\$31.00
Dinner	\$52.80

- 4.7.5 Tax invoice receipts are required for all accommodation and meal expenses.
- 4.7.6 At no time will alcohol be paid for or reimbursed by Council.
- 4.7.7 At no time will mini bar use be paid for or reimbursed by Council.

4.8 Transportation

4.8.1 General Travel Arrangements

- A Council motor vehicle should be used for travel wherever possible. Payment for the use of a private motor vehicle will only be considered where requirements are met under Council's Policy on Use of Employee Private Vehicle for Council Related Business.
- Council vehicles should not be parked at airport parking lots for periods of greater than 1 working day as this limits operational use of the vehicle unless approved by the General Manager or Chief Executive Officer.
- The most direct route is to be taken and the most practicable and economical mode of transport utilised, subject to any personal and/or medical considerations.
- Where a motor vehicle is utilised, Council will pay the costs associated with parking and road tolls (it is noted that the latter may not render receipts). The driver is personally responsible for all traffic or parking fines incurred whilst utilising a motor vehicle on Council business.

4.8.2 Transfers

For transfers between an airport and hotel or event venue and all other travel:

- a. Where possible and depending on time constraints, the most direct route should be taken with the most reasonable cost mode of transport such as uber, the hotel bus shuttle, train, taxi etc. Where travel is required in unfamiliar locations and where direct public transport is not available, and or there are a number of staff traveling together a chauffeur service may be the most reasonable mode of transport.
- b. Reasonable transfer transport expenses paid for by staff will be reimbursed in accordance with the reimbursement requirements stated below in 4.11.

4.8.3 Car Rental

- a. Car rental may not be the most effective method of local transport, considering rental, petrol and parking charges, time loss in acquiring and returning the car, difficulty of driving in a strange city etc.
- b. Council holds an account with a car hire company. See Council Officers who regularly book travel for details of the current car hire company to obtain the best rates.
- c. The most appropriate car is to be arranged bearing in mind cost and travel requirements. Special arrangements for drivers under 25 years of age will apply and a funding advance may be required for the traveller only when a purchase card or purchase order cannot be used.
- d. Council's motor vehicle insurance policy automatically extends to cover all hired vehicles whilst engaged on Council business, therefore no additional insurance is required to be purchased from the car rental company.

4.8.4 Council Officer use of private motor vehicle

The use of private vehicles by employees is to be in accordance with Council's policy Use of Employee Private Vehicle for Council Related Business.

4.8.5 Councillor use of private vehicle

- a. Councillor's private vehicle usage may be reimbursed by council if the:
 - i. travel within the FNQROC region (Council regions from Hinchinbrook, north to Cook and west to Carpentaria) is required to conduct normal business;
 - ii. travel outside the FNQROC region has been endorsed by council resolution;
 - iii. claim for mileage is substantiated with log book details; and
 - iv. total travel claim does not exceed the cost of the same travel using economy flights plus the cost of taxi or similar transfers.
- b. Fuel costs associated with use of a Councillor's private vehicle are covered by the private vehicle expenses reimbursement rates. Reimbursement rates for business kilometres as published by the Australian Tax Office will be applied.
- c. Private vehicle insurance is at the risk of the user for both private and business use.
- d. NOTE: Any fines incurred while travelling in council-owned vehicles or privately owned vehicles when attending to council business, will be the responsibility of the councillor incurring the fine.

4.8.6 Policy on vehicle use if accumulating over 12,600 km per year

- a. Reimbursement of private vehicle use is only cost effective under a threshold of 12,600 km (at time of writing).
- b. Councillors expecting to travel over 12,600 km per year can, by request to the CEO, be provided with a Council vehicle, instead of being reimbursed a kilometric allowance.

Travel and Accommodation Changes

4.8.7 Itinerary Changes

- a. When itinerary changes are absolutely necessary en route and Council officers who have booked the travel are unavailable, staff should:
- b. process the change via the nearest facility providing the required travel services; and
- c. return to Council any unused or partially used tickets, which should be treated the same as cash.

4.9 Cancellation

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of the travelling Councillor to advise the Mayor's PA or the CEO's PA when a confirmed reservation is not required. Council Officers are to advise their manager and the officer who made the travel arrangement and ensure cancellations are made.
- 4.2 Travellers should note that cancellation penalties are detailed on itineraries.

Travel Related Expenses and Reimbursement

4.10 Authorisation of Claims

- 4.10.1 Travel claims will be authorised as follows:
 - a. the Chief Executive Officer will authorise travel expense claims made by the Mayor, Councillors and General Managers;
 - b. claims made by Council Officers will be authorised by the relevant Manager or for Managers their relevant General Manager;
 - c. a General Manager will authorise the CEO's travel claims.
- 4.10.2 Travel expenses claimed by staff but not supported with dockets/receipts and/or tax invoices will not be paid for by Council, unless approved by the General Manager. Supporting documentation should be dated to allow the authorising officer to determine if the expense item relates to the authorised period of travel. Dockets should also contain details of the nature of the transaction to allow the authorising officer to determine if the item is valid or not. If a claim is made for road tolls paid for by staff, a copy of the payer's credit card or bank statement identifying the transaction should be submitted.
- 4.10.3 Registration fees for a conference can entitle staff to free meals at the conference venue. Claims for meals at other venues when these "free" conference meals are available will not be paid for by Council.

- 4.10.4 Claims for meals, drinks or entertainment for "other people" are addressed by the Entertainment and Hospitality Policy.
- 4.10.5 Provision of a payment in advance may be requested by staff where orders or credit card arrangements cannot be made however an advance must be fully accounted for upon return and any unspent portion returned to Council.

4.10.2 Non Allowable Expenses

The following are an example of the expenses that will not be reimbursed by Council:

- a. alcohol (where not included in conference fees);
- b. mini bar;
- c. tips and gratuities - this may be negotiated with the relevant General Manager for appropriate circumstances;
- d. airline club fees;
- e. toiletries;
- f. barber or hair stylist;
- g. traffic parking fines;
- h. travel costs not applicable to the conference/approved event;
- i. in-house movies;
- j. in-house or external entertainment not directly related to the conference/approved event;
- k. personal gifts, goods or services purchased; and
- l. all costs incurred for partners and children including:
 - i. difference between the cost of single and double room,
 - ii. meals,
 - iii. travel,
 - iv. incidentals (e.g. laundry,, wi-fi),
 - v. partner's program.

4.11 Reimbursement

- 4.11.1 For reasonable business related travel expenses paid for by staff, reimbursements will be provided upon the presentation of an Expense Reimbursement Form with tax invoice receipts.
- 4.11.2 No reimbursement will be made without tax invoice receipts. (If tax invoice receipts have been lost or where not provided inform Accounts Payable) Reimbursement vouchers and tax invoices are to be submitted within 14 days after the expense has been incurred. Approval for reimbursement of invoices presented after 14 days will be at the discretion of the Finance Manager who will consider the reasoning for the delay.

Overseas Travel

4.12 Overseas Travel

- 4.12.1 For all Councillor travel outside of Australia for Council Business, approval must first be provided via Council resolution.
- 4.12.2 For all Council Officers traveling outside of Australia for Council Business, approval must first be provided by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.12.3 Fees for travellers' cheques, passports, visas, currency conversion, travel insurance, immunisation and any other required overseas related travel expenses shall be reimbursed by Council upon submission of receipts and a completed Expense Reimbursement Form.
- 4.12.4 In accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Section 188, the following details regarding overseas travel business activities must be collected, and reported in the Annual Report of the relevant year.
- a. The name and position held of the staff member.
 - b. The destination of the overseas travel.
 - c. The purpose of the overseas travel.
 - d. The cost of the overseas travel.
 - e. Any other information considered relevant to the overseas travel.

4.12.2 Passport and Visa

Staff and travel administrators should note the following when making airline bookings:

a. Passport

- i. Staff should ensure that their passport has a minimum validity of six months from the date of return from travel.
- ii. It is important that the name provided for the booking is the one shown on the passport that will be used for the travel.
- iii. Some staff might have more than one passport and administrators should check with staff which one they intend travelling on before they make a booking.

b. Visa

- i. It is the responsibility of staff to ensure they have the appropriate visa for their travel.
- ii. Staff should check with the relevant diplomatic mission in Australia to ascertain the visa requirements for the intended travel.

Travel and Accommodation Considerations

4.13 Workplace Health & Safety when travelling

- 4.13.1 When planning and preparing for work related travel, due consideration to the potential health and safety risks which may be incurred by staff through undertaking the travel must be considered.
- 4.13.2 Examples of potential health and safety risks for intrastate or interstate travel, include but are not limited to:
- a. excessive hours of driving if using a motor vehicle;

- b. driving a motor vehicle in unfamiliar places, particularly capital cities or on outback roads;
 - c. any hazards identified at places of accommodation; and
 - d. any personal activities undertaken before or after the work day such as jogging or walking in dark or unlit areas such as bush tracks, parks, alleys and any other place not normally frequented by members of the public.
- 4.13.3 Examples of potential health and safety risks for overseas travel, include but are not limited to:
- a. local diseases such as typhoid, cholera, malaria, dengue, etc;
 - b. food, water and hygiene standards which can cause sickness;
 - c. lack of security or emergency standards at places of accommodation; and
 - d. countries of instability due to war, riot or known terrorist activities.
- 4.13.4 In addition to the above, it should be noted that at all times whilst travelling staff must abide by all prevailing jurisdictional laws. This also includes any lawful instructions and/or use of any equipment or safety device provided for their health and safety.
- 4.13.5 All injuries, illnesses or incidents must be reported as soon as possible to the supervisor. Diary entries or notes should be kept to assist with the completion of an incident report form on return from the travel.

4.14 Workers compensation when travelling

- 4.14.1 Workers compensation cover is provided for staff while conducting council related business within Queensland, interstate or overseas for a period no longer than six months.
- 4.14.2 It is recommended that additional travel insurance should be arranged for travel outside Australia as the higher cost of treatment and medical evacuation if required following injury would not be fully covered by the table of costs provided for under the Queensland *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*.
- 4.14.3 Any injury or illness which occurs as a result of or while conducting council related business, and which requires hospitalisation or treatment by a registered medical practitioner must be reported as soon as possible to the supervisor. Diary entries, notes, receipts, tests, scans etc, must be kept to assist with the completion of workers compensation documentation during or on return from the travel.

4.15 FBT

- 4.15.1 One of the substantiation requirements for FBT purposes is to obtain from staff a travel diary where:
- a. the officer's expense is incurred in respect of travel **within** Australia for a duration of more than five nights and the travel was not exclusively for the purpose of performing the employment duties (the fact that the business travel is such that the officer is required to stay away over a weekend will not, in itself, mean that the trip is not undertaken exclusively in the course of his or her employment); or
 - b. the staff's expense is incurred in respect of travel **outside** Australia for a period of more than five nights.
- 4.15.2 A travel diary must show for each work or business activity, the nature of the work activity, where and when it took place, the duration of the activity and the date the entry was made.

- 4.15.3 Within two weeks of return, staff shall prepare a verbal or written report. The report shall include:
- a. FBT travel diary requirements;
 - b. Objectives of the visit;
 - c. Benefits gained from the travel, both for the individual and Council.
- 4.15.4 These reports shall be provided to the Manager/General Manager or CEO, as appropriate.

5. Responsibility

Council is responsible for the adoption, amendment and repeal of the Policy and the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the development and amendment of any associated procedures and guidelines relevant to the Policy.

6. Review

It is the responsibility of the Finance Manager to monitor the adequacy of this policy and recommend appropriate changes. This policy will be formally reviewed every three years or as required by Council.

This Policy is to remain in force until otherwise amended/repealed by resolution of Council.

This Policy repeals the former Tablelands Regional Council Policy titled "Travel and Accommodation Policy" adopted 22 November 2018.

JUSTIN COMMONS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER