

COONAMBLE SHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY FOR THE PAYMENT OF EXPENSES AND THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

Part 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title of Policy and Commencement Date:

This policy will be known as the “Policy for the Payment of Expenses and the Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors” and will commence on and from 1 January 2007.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy:

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred or to be incurred by councillors. The policy also ensures that the facilities provided to assist councillors to carry out their civic duties are reasonable.

1.3 Objectives and Coverage of the Policy:

This policy is to ensure that elected members are reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred whilst conducting Council business and applies to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and all other Councillors.

1.4 Making and Adoption of the Policy:

The draft policy, whilst approved by Council at the October 2006 meeting, was subsequently displayed for a period of 28 days following which Council considered submissions and formally adopted the policy at the December 2006 meeting.

1.5 Reporting Requirements:

Section 428 of the Local Government Act 1993 requires Council to include in its annual report:

- The council’s policy on the provision of facilities for, and the payment of expenses to, the mayor and councillors
- The total amount of money expended during the year on providing those facilities and paying those expenses
- Additional information as required by the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

Additionally, Council will report separately on:

- Total cost of expenses and facilities for the Mayor and all Councillors
- Spouse/Partner/Accompanying Person expenses
- Training and Skill Development expenses
- Provision of Facilities expenses.

1.6 Legislative Provisions:

This policy is made under section 252 of the Local Government Act 1993 and in accordance with clause 403 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

1.7 Other Government Policy Provisions:

The policy has been developed utilising the guidelines provided by the Department of Local Government (September 2006) and enhances provisions of the Council's Code of Conduct and the Independent Commission Against Corruption publication *No Excuse for Misuse*.

1.8 Approval Arrangements:

Approval for attendance at conferences, seminars and other meetings should generally be approved by Council resolution however, should this not be practicable, approval may be given by the Mayor and General Manager. Should attendance be proposed by the Mayor or General Manager approval may be given by the Deputy Mayor and/or another Councillor.

Part 2 – PAYMENT OF EXPENSES

GENERAL PROVISIONS

2.1 Process of Reimbursement:

All claims for reimbursement of expenses must be made within two (2) months. Reimbursement will only be made where appropriate receipts and tax invoices are provided and a claim form completed and signed.

2.2 Payment in Advance:

Provision of a payment in advance may be requested by a councillor however such advance must be fully accounted for upon return and any unspent portion returned to Council.

2.3 Monetary Limits:

Monetary limits for "out of pocket" expenses will be paid only to a maximum of \$80 per day whilst in a metropolitan area (Newcastle /Sydney/Wollongong/Melbourne/Brisbane/other capital cities) and \$60 per day elsewhere.

2.4 Taxi, Bus and Rail Fares

Council will reimburse fares for reasonable travel while on council related business. Maximum fee that will be reimbursed is \$50 per trip and \$100 in any one day.

2.5 Duration of Expense Period:

Council will only meet expenses for the duration of the official function duly authorised for attendance. Duration of a function includes travel on the day before and the day following.

2.6 Payment of Expenses – Spouses, Partners, Accompanying Persons:

Council may, by resolution, agree to pay expenses for a spouse/partner or accompanying person where a function is of a formal or ceremonial nature and it is considered that they be reasonably expected to attend. Alternatively, approval may be given by the Mayor and General Manager. Should attendance be proposed by the Mayor's or General Manager's partner, approval may be given by the Deputy Mayor and/or another Councillor.

Council may, by resolution, agree to cover the cost of registration/ partners program and the official conference dinner of the Shires Association Annual Conference. Additional accommodation, meals and travel expenses will be the responsibility of the individual councillors.

SPECIFIC EXPENSES FOR MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

2.7 General Travel Arrangements:

Councillors should arrange a Council motor vehicle for travel wherever possible. Payment for private motor vehicle will only be considered where a Council vehicle is not available.

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.

2.8 Intrastate/Interstate Travel Arrangements:

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.

Where air travel is considered necessary, Councillors are expected to utilise economy class. Council may, however, resolve that business class be utilised in circumstances that require business associates to be accompanied.

2.9 Overseas Travel:

Overseas travel will only be permitted following approval by Council and fourteen days public notification being given in the local press. Council will not pay any costs associated with spouse/partner or other accompanying persons.

2.10 Attendance at Seminars and Conferences:

Following any conference or seminar a written report must be provided by at least one of the persons attending and cover all aspects that are relevant to Council business and/or the local community.

Attendance at the Shires Association Annual Conference will be limited to the Mayor, General Manager and two Councillors.

Council shall pay all conference registration fees, including the costs related to official lunches and dinners and associated tours where they are relevant to the business and interest of Council. Additionally Council will meet reasonable cost of transportation and accommodation.

2.11 Accommodation Costs:

Council will pay for an appropriate standard of accommodation and acknowledges the economic and practical benefits of being accommodated at the conference/seminar venue.

2.12 Attendance at Dinners and Other Non-Council Functions:

Council will meet the cost of councillors' attendance at dinners and other non-council functions which the community believes to be an integral part of a councillor's duty. Council will not meet any additional cost of refreshments or donations and the like.

2.13 Training and Educational Expenses:

Council will meet reasonable costs associated with training and educational courses, provided they are relevant to the functions directly associated with the role of councillor. Expenses similar to those of conferences and seminars apply with a limit of \$3,000 total cost per councillor in any one year.

2.14 Telephone Call Costs and Related Expenses:

Council will pay up to \$20 per councillor per month for telephone and internet costs for Council business subject to evidence being provided of such use.

2.15 Care and Other Related Expenses:

In accordance with the principles of participation, access and equity Council will pay up to \$40 per councillor per month for carer arrangements which includes payment for childcare, elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family members of councillors. Reimbursement will be made in accordance with the Process of Reimbursement clause above.

2.16 Legal Assistance Provisions & Expenses:

Council will indemnify or reimburse the reasonable legal expenses of:

- (a) a councillor defending an action arising from the performance in good faith of a function under the Local Government act (section 731 refers); or
- (b) 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; or
- (c) a councillor for proceedings before the Local Government Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal or an investigative body provided the subject of the proceedings arises from the performance in good faith of a function under the Act and the Tribunal or investigative body makes a finding substantially favourable to the councillor.

2.17 Insurance Provisions & Expenses:

Council will provide insurance cover for councillors as follows:

- (a) public liability (for matters arising out of councillors' performance of their civic duties and/or exercise of their council functions)
- (b) Professional indemnity (for matters arising out of councillors performance of their civic duties and/or exercise of their council functions)
- (c) Personal injury while on council business
- (d) Insurance against legal costs incurred as detailed in the above clause.

Part 3 – PROVISION OF FACILITIES

GENERAL PROVISIONS

3.1 Provision of Facilities Generally:

Council will not provide equipment such as mobile phone, facsimile and the like directly to individual councillors however, such facilities as required by way of secretarial services, telephone, email and facsimile may be utilised, by prior arrangement and the General Manager's consent, at Council's Administration Centre for Council business only. Such use will be limited to an average of one service per month.

Council facilities and equipment are to be used only for Council business purposes.

Council will provide meals and light refreshments before, during or after council, committee or working party meetings.

Council will provide a Corporate tie or scarf, business cards and name tag for each councillor.

3.2 Corporate Hospitality – Business Associates:

Council delegates may provide refreshments to business associates and be reimbursed for any reasonable cost to a maximum of \$60 per function/event whether over one day or two or more days.

Where business associates are provided with a meal, the maximum cost per person will be \$60.

3.3 Provision of Additional Facilities/Equipment and Services for Mayor

Council will provide a dedicated motor vehicle for the Mayor and will permit private use in accordance with Council's Vehicle Leaseback Policy. The standard of motor vehicle will be equivalent to a Holden Berlina.

Council will provide a furnished and equipped Mayoral Office for conducting of council business only.

Secretarial services, etc. for the Mayor shall be unlimited for Council related business.

Part 4 – OTHER MATTERS

4.1 Acquisition & Returning of Facilities/Equipment by Councillors:

Councillors must return any property of the Council to the Administration Centre within seven (7) days of cessation of their role as councillor.

Draft Submitted to Council: **11 October 2006**
Formally Adopted by Council: **13 December 2006**