

<b>POLICY LOCATION</b>	Corporate Services	<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	Council Expenses
<b>POLICY NUMBER</b>	CA04	<b>DATE ADOPTED</b>	August 2020
<b>REVISION NUMBER</b>	4	<b>REVISION DATE</b>	August 2023

## Purpose

The purpose of the Buloke Shire Council Expenses policy is to set the guidelines for reimbursement and/or payment of necessary out of pocket expenses incurred by all Councillors, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, members of the Council’s Delegated Committees and independent members of the Council’s Audit and Risk Committee in the performance of their civic and statutory duties.

## Scope

This policy is applicable to all Councillors, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of the Buloke Shire Council (Council), members of the Council’s Delegated Committees and independent members of the Council’s Audit and Risk Committee.

This policy outlines the prescribed types of Councillor, Mayoral, Deputy-Mayoral, Delegated Committee member and Audit and Risk Committee independent member out-of-pocket expenses, support, resources and facilities provided to Councillors, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, and members of the Council’s Delegated Committees and independent members of the Council’s Audit and Risk Committee in the performance of duties necessary and appropriate for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the Council.

## Definitions

In this Policy –

**“Council”** refers to the Buloke Shire Council.

**“Councillor Expenses”** are those bona-fide expenses reasonably and necessarily incurred by Councillors, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor (out-of- pocket) or on behalf of Councillors, the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for the purpose of Council business. These are categorised in four areas, namely travel and accommodation expenses, membership and professional development expenses, carer expenses, and information and communication technology expenses.

**“Committee Member Expenses”** are those bona fide expenses reasonably and necessarily incurred by

- members of the Council’s Delegated Committees and independent members of the Council’s Audit and Risk Committee (out-of-pocket), and/or
- on the Council’s Delegated Committees and the Audit and Risk Committee

for the purpose of Council business. These are categorised in three areas, namely travel and accommodation expenses, membership and professional development expenses and carer expenses.

**“Delegated Committee”** is a delegated committee as defined under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

**“Other Official Duties”** are bona fide duties related to the performance of the role of a Councillor or a member of the Council’s Delegated Committee.

## Policy Statement

The Council is beholden by the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and has an obligation under section 41 of the Act to develop and maintain a Council Expenses policy outlining the details of Councillor, Mayoral, Deputy-Mayoral and Delegated Committee Member Expenses incurred and support, resources and facilities provided in the course of their duties, which are paid or reimbursed by the Council. The Council also provides support, resources and facilities to its Audit and Risk Committee independent members, and expenses incurred by its Audit and Risk Committee in bona fide activities are paid or reimbursed by the Council.

This policy acknowledges the demands and expectations placed on Councillors, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Council’s Delegated Committees and the Audit and Risk Committee and where necessary provides that appropriate resourcing and facilities be offered to successfully fulfil these roles.

The cost of allowances and expense reimbursements paid to Councillors, the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Council’s Delegated Committees and its Audit and Risk Committee, together with the costs of related services and resources, are managed as part of Council’s annual budget process.

This policy recognises the Council must have regard to the principles of transparency in decision making in its operations and administration and community accountability.

## Guidelines

### **General – Councillors, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Members of Delegated Committees, Independent Members of Audit and Risk Committees**

1. Services and facilities, including standard-issue stationary as requested, are provided for use while conducting Council-related business.
2. When claiming out-of-pocket expenses, original receipts or supporting documentation must be provided to support claims. Councillors, members of Delegated Committees and independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee shall submit claims and valid tax invoices/receipts for reimbursement within 60 days of expenses being incurred, or within two weeks after 30 June annually (whichever is the earlier). Any claims received after this time will be subject to a Council resolution prior to such claim being paid.
3. Claims for facilities and expenses other than those included in this document should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for setting aside an appropriate amount in Council’s Annual Budget for reimbursement of

Councillor, Mayoral, Deputy-Mayoral, Delegated Committee and Audit and Risk Committee expenses.

4. Any costs incurred by a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee or independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee which are not covered specifically within this policy will not be met, unless the Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee or independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee has received prior authorisation from the Council or, if delegated to do so, from the Chief Executive Officer.
5. Details of Councillor, Mayoral, Deputy-Mayoral and Delegated Committee member expenses will be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee in accordance with Section 40 of the Act and will be published in Council's Annual Report of operations.

#### **Travel and Accommodation Expenses – Councillors, Mayor and Deputy Mayor**

1. Councillors, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor may claim and be reimbursed under the following circumstances:
  - Attendance at Council Meetings, Councillor briefings, meetings of Delegated Committees and meetings of Community Asset Committees of the Council.
  - Attendance at civic or ceremonial functions convened in accord with Council's Civic Function policy.
  - Attendance at meetings, functions or in the undertaking of other official duties as a representative of the Council or the Mayor.
  - Attendance at meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities to which the Councillor has been appointed as Council's delegate or is otherwise authorised by the Council to attend.
  - Attendance at inspections of a road, property or area or to discuss with any person(s) any matter related to Council business and/or to carry out activities in the capacity of a Councillor.
  - Attendance at meetings with Council Officers on any matters relating to the Council.
2. In addition to travel reimbursements set out above, Councillors may claim a remote area travel allowance at the rate of \$40 per day (or as may be amended from time to time by a determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal) to attend Council meetings, or municipal or community functions where that Councillor resides more than 50 kilometres from the specified meeting centre, to a maximum of \$5,000 in any one year.
3. On and off-street car parking fees may be reimbursed and claims should be accompanied by details stating the nature of Council business and date and time of activity.
4. Councillors shall have access to a Council supplied Myki card to enable travel on trains, trams, buses and light rail journeys. Councillors with personal Myki cards may submit a claim for specific trips undertaken on Council business.
5. Access will be provided, wherever possible, to Council fleet vehicles for use when attending Council related activities. A Council vehicle shall be provided to Mayor.

6. Costs relating to use of a private vehicle shall be reimbursed at the rates set out in the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* as determined by the Commissioner for Taxation and reviewed annually.
7. A record of private vehicle use must be maintained by the Councillor and shall contain details of Council business, date, destination and number of kilometres and any tolls.
8. Councillors may incur tolls including those associated with the use of CityLink and EastLink while conducting Council business. Councillors may seek reimbursement of costs associated with tolls, including the use of day passes or those transactions incurred as part of existing personal e-tag accounts.
9. Council supplied e-tags will be provided for the Council fleet vehicle issued to the Mayor.
10. All proposals relating to interstate travel by the Mayor and Councillors requires the approval of the Council.
11. When travelling on Council business, Councillors may require accommodation. Councillors may stay in reasonable accommodation appropriate to the area travelled to and the nature of the visit.
12. Bookings for accommodation should be made through the Office of the Chief Executive. Prior to making the booking, the authorisation of the Chief Executive Officer must be obtained. All reasonable sustenance and incidental costs associated with travel will be met by the Council.

**Travel and Accommodation Expenses – Members of Delegated Committees and Independent Members of the Audit and Risk Committee**

1. Members of Delegated Committees and of the Council's Audit and Risk Committee may claim and be reimbursed under the following circumstances:
  - Attendance at Council Meetings and Councillor briefings.
  - Attendance at meetings, functions or in the undertaking of other official duties as a representative of the Council.
  - Attendance at meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities where authorised by the Council to attend.
  - Attendance at meetings with Council Officers on any matters relating to the activities of the Delegated Committee or the Audit and Risk Committee.
2. On and off-street car parking fees may be reimbursed and claims should be accompanied by details stating the nature of Council business and date and time of activity.
3. Members of Delegated Committees and the Audit and Risk Committee may submit a claim for specific trips undertaken on Council business where such travel incurs cost on their personal Myki cards for trains, trams, buses and light rail journeys.
4. Costs relating to use of a private vehicle shall be reimbursed at the rates set out in the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* as determined by the Commissioner for Taxation and reviewed annually.

5. A record of private vehicle use must be maintained by the member of the Delegated Committee, and the Audit and Risk Committee and shall contain details of Council business, date, destination and number of kilometres and any tolls.
6. Members of Delegated Committees may incur tolls including those associated with the use of CityLink and EastLink while conducting Council business. Members of Delegated Committees may seek reimbursement of costs associated with tolls, including the use of day passes or those transactions incurred as part of existing personal e-tag accounts.
7. All proposals relating to interstate travel by members of Delegated Committees requires the approval of the Council.
8. When travelling on Council business, members of Delegated Committees and the Audit and Risk Committee may require accommodation. Members of Delegated Committees and the Audit and Risk Committee may stay in reasonable accommodation appropriate to the area travelled to and the nature of the visit.
9. Bookings for accommodation should be made through the Office of the Chief Executive. Prior to making the booking, the authorisation of the Chief Executive Officer must be obtained. All reasonable sustenance and incidental costs associated with travel will be met by the Council.

#### **Memberships and Professional Development – Councillors, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Members of Delegated Committees**

1. Councillors and members of Delegated Committees shall have the opportunity of participating in a range of conferences, functions, training courses, seminars and similar activities. The type shall generally be of a one-off, occasional or short- term nature and be supported by a program, course material or invitation by organisers.
2. The Council will reimburse Councillors or directly pay membership and subscription fees to bodies and organisations whose activities are relevant to the role of Councillors or role of Council. In seeking membership or subscription, the Councillor will identify the link to Council business and how membership will assist in development or fulfilment of their role.

#### **Carer Expenses – Councillors, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Members of Delegated Committees**

1. Reimbursement of child care costs will be available where the provision of child care is reasonably required in the performance of a Councillor or Delegated Committee member's role. This applies to the care of a dependent, while the Councillor or Delegated Committee member is undertaking their official duties; and may include expenses such as hourly fees and booking fees, if applicable.
2. Child care costs are not eligible for reimbursement if paid to a person who normally or regularly lives with the Councillor or Delegated Committee member, except where a live-in (professional) helper, such as a nanny, is required to work extra time at extra expense because of the Councillor's or Delegated Committee member's duties.
3. Child care costs are not eligible for reimbursement if paid to a person who has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor or Delegated Committee member; or has a relationship with the Councillor, Delegated Committee member or their partner.

4. Expenses incurred by Councillors and members of Delegated Committees who are carers in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012* will be reimbursed where alternative care is required in order for Councillors and members of Delegated Committees to perform their role.
5. Claims must be accompanied by a receipt from the care provider showing the date and time care was provided and detail the reason care was needed on each occasion.

#### **Information and Communication Technology Expenses – Councillors, Mayor and Deputy Mayor**

1. Communication equipment and services shall be provided to assist Councillors in the conduct of Council business. This includes equipment and services that support landline and mobile telephones, internet access, multifunction devices, laptop computers and tablet devices. A reasonable arrangement of equipment and services will be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate and be recorded on a supplementary register within the Council's records management system.
2. Issued items remain the property of Council and must be returned at the end of the Council term.

#### **Exclusions – Councillors, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Members of Delegated Committees and Independent Members of the Audit and Risk Committee**

1. Expenses arising from a breach of road, traffic, parking or other regulations or laws will not be reimbursed or funded in any way by Council.
2. Councillors, members of Delegated Committees and independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee will not be reimbursed for the purchase of alcohol.
3. Councillors, members of Delegated Committees and independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee will not be reimbursed for the payment of travel and accommodation for spouses, partners or accompanying persons for trips undertaken on council business.
4. Independent Members of the Audit and Risk Committee who reside outside of Victoria will not be reimbursed for the expenses associated with interstate travel or interstate accommodation to attend meetings

#### **Election Period Policy**

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councillors and members of Council's Delegated Committees will comply with the requirements of the Council's Election Period Policy.

#### **References**

This Policy was developed in accord with the following legislation:

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*
- *Carers Recognition Act 2012*
- *Gender Equity Act 2020*
- *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Scrutiny Standards Act 2019*

This Policy is implemented in conjunction with the following documents:

- Buloke Shire Council Councillor Code of Conduct
- Buloke Shire Council Fleet Management policy
- Buloke Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee Charter
- Buloke Shire Council Election Period policy
- Recognition and Support, the Victorian Government's Policy Statement on local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources April 2008