Council Expenses Policy

City of Casey

Approval Body:	COUNCIL
Endorsement Date of Current Version:	16/09/2025
Current Version:	3.0 Policy documents change from time to time and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy on the SharePoint to ensure that you have the current version.
Compulsory Review Cycle:	4 years
Review Date:	16/09/2029 It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of the approval body.
Responsible Department:	Communications and Corporate Governance
Responsible Team:	Office of Council
Relevant Legislation:	Local Government Act 2020 Carers Recognition Act 2012 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Freedom of Information Act 1982 Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 Gender Equality Act 2020
Relevant Council Documents:	Financial Reserves Policy Enterprise Agreement

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	Fleet Management Policy Model Councillor Code of Conduct
ECM ID:	11226336

1. Purpose and Intent

Council, in accordance with Section 41 of the *Local Government Act 2020* ('the Act)' must adopt and maintain an expenses policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors and members of delegated committees.

This policy:

- provides guidance on financial entitlements and resources available to Councillors and members of delegated committees, which are to support them in the performance of their official duties.
- provides direction around 'reasonable support' for Councillors and delegated committee members to perform their duties without disadvantage.
- advises on reimbursement procedures for Councillors and delegated committee members.
- makes clear the reporting requirements in relation to reimbursements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors in relation to resources and support provided by the organisation. Sections 4.3-4.5 of this policy apply to Councillors and members of delegated committees.

The Recognition and Support - The Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources, which is set by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and is indexed annually, describes the minimum support to be provided to Councillors and the Mayor.

3. Definitions

Key term	Definition
Bona fide	genuine, real, without intention to deceive.
Council	means Casey City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 2020.
Councillors	has the same meaning as in the Local Government Act 2020.
Council officer	means the Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.
Carer	meaning as defined within the Carers Recognition Act 2012.
Delegated committee	meaning as defined within the Local Government Act 2020.
Expenses	costs incurred by Councillors in performing their duties as a Councillor.
Formal Study	training and education provided by a recognised training or tertiary education provider that leads to a formal qualification.

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Reasonable expenses	as referenced in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 (ITAA 1997).
The Act	means the Local Government Act 2020.

4. Policy

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this policy outline the resources necessary for Councillors and delegated committee members to perform their roles.

Councillors and members of delegated committees will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that are:

- bona fide legitimate business expenses (see Definitions).
- have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or delegated committee member and are reasonably necessary for the Councillor and/or member of a delegated committee to perform this role.

Claims for reimbursement will be denied if they are found not to meet the criteria for a legitimate expense, e.g. claims for alcohol or items unrelated to Council business. Claims for reimbursement that are not substantiated with receipts will also be rejected.

Expenses incurred, and reimbursement claims made, are reported via the Audit and Risk Committee and will be made available through Councils' Publicly Available Documents.

4.1. Councillor Resources

To maintain its commitment to environmental sustainability, Council is a digital first workplace. To enable Councillors to work digitally, each Councillor is entitled to the following:

- 1 x laptop
- 1 x mobile phone
- 1 x data allowance
- Basic stationery

Councillors have access to a dedicated resource room, which includes access to printers, personal lockers, and desk space to dock their laptops to support their duties whilst at the Council Offices.

4.1.1. Resources / Facilities Support for the Mayor

A fully equipped office and reasonable administrative support from the Office of Council team will be provided to assist the Mayor to undertake the role effectively.

A mayoral vehicle is provided for Council purposes and for the personal use of the Mayor. This vehicle will be selected in line with Section 6.3 Vehicle Selection Criteria of the Fleet Management Policy to align with Casey's environmental sustainability, safety and vehicle efficiency objectives.

The Mayor may elect to use their own vehicle and be reimbursed for these bona fide expenses monthly at an annualised rate determined by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The rate will be determined based on the costs that would otherwise be incurred by supplying a Mayoral vehicle. Infringements incurred when driving or for parking violations will not be reimbursed.

Cab charges or similar ride sharing providers will be made available where a fleet car is not available. Where a Mayoral vehicle has been provided by Council alternative reimbursements such as cab charges will not be available.

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4.1.2. Communication costs

Council will meet reasonable communication costs incurred on provided equipment (i.e. data allowance and phone bills).

Mobile devices and associated data allowances are provided to Councillors to conduct Council business. Personal calls/texts and data usage should be minimised and where significant personal use has occurred, costs must be reimbursed to Council. Private international use of mobile devices should not occur.

Where a Councillor has elected to use their own mobile phone or device, Council will provide reimbursement at rates agreed by the CEO. This will align with the average cost incurred should Council have provided the equipment or connection directly.

4.1.3. Ticketed Functions

Council will pay the costs of ticketed functions which relate to Council business for the Mayor and one guest, or a Councillor attending as the Mayor's delegate (including their guest).

In addition, Council will pay the cost of ticketed functions in accordance with Council resolutions.

4.2. Councillor Training and Education Expenses

An annual endorsed budget is set, with allocations for each Councillor and the Mayor, from which Council will pay for or reimburse Councillors for costs incurred for relevant training and education expenses. This amount will be published annually in the endorsed budget.

To further support Councillors in fulfilling their professional development requirements, the Council will set aside an annual allocation for each individual Councillor. This dedicated allocation is designed with flexibility in mind, allowing any unspent portion to be rolled over into subsequent financial years, thereby providing Councillors the opportunity to engage in development activities at a pace that aligns with their schedules and evolving needs. This provides for attendance at conferences, seminars, study tours, formal study and memberships.

All training and education should provide a professional development opportunity, which will enhance the Councillors' performance and/or provide a direct return on investment to the Council by the Councillor being exposed to information and insights that will assist in the enhancement of Council's policies, services, facilities or programs.

Mandatory training, whether provided by Council or by third party facilitation in accordance with s27A, s32 or s33A of the Act, does not form part of the individual Councillor annual endorsed budget allocation and will be budgeted for separately.

No training or educational allocations budgeted or accumulated prior to an election will be available for a Councillor following their re-election. In circumstances where a membership extends beyond the current term of the Councillor, membership fees will only be funded in proportion to the remainder of the term.

4.3. Reimbursement of Expenses

Expenses incurred in performance of official duties includes, but is not limited to:

- attendance at meetings of Council and its committees.
- attendance at briefing sessions, workshops, civic events or functions convened by Council attendance at conferences, workshops and training programs related to the role of Councillor, Mayor or Deputy Mayor.
- attendance at meetings, events or functions representing Council duties in relation to constituents concerning Council business.

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4.3.1. Travel

For travel by car, reimbursement for mileage expenses will be paid based on the rate set out in Council's Enterprise Agreement. Evidence must be provided including the date, purpose and distance travelled to support the claim. Distance of travel should reflect the use of a direct route or main arterial roads.

Parking and road toll expenses will be reimbursed upon provision of relevant documentation. Infringements incurred when driving or for parking violations will not be reimbursed.

Cab charges or ride sharing providers may be used where fleet vehicles or personal use vehicles are not available.

4.3.2. Interstate and International Travel

Where a conference, seminar, event or study tour requires travel, a maximum of two Councillors will be approved by the Mayor for attendance at the same conference, seminar, event or study tour. Any requests for additional Councillors to attend the same event will require a resolution of Council.

The Office of Council team will coordinate booking and payment for Councillor accommodation at the conference hotel or appropriate nearby venue, if the cost is less than those promoted by the conference organiser. Prior approval of the CEO (or delegate) is required for use of a hire car.

Councillors travelling on Council business, and required to fly or use any other means of public transport, will be eligible for economy class travel only.

Councillors are not to accrue frequent flyer, loyalty, status, or any other reward points when travelling on Council business. Frequent flyer schemes or similar loyalty programs have the potential to influence the choice of supplier for Council travel and may result in negative reputational or conflict of interest risks.

Councillors are entitled to use a taxi / ride share service from their home to the airport and return, and from the airport to the conference/event venue and return, and will be reimbursed as per 4.3 of this Policy.

Councillors will be paid a daily travel allowance prior to departure, which will cover reasonable travel expenses such as meals (including non-alcoholic drinks), transfers, taxi's and other out of pocket expenses at a rate determined by the Australia Taxation Office and is adjusted annually.

Councillors are responsible for ensuring any passport or visa requirements are met for international travel.

Councillors are covered under Workcover, both in Australia and overseas, and are also covered under Personal Injury and Travel Insurance policies held by Council. These policies do not cover non-business-related travel, activities, or items.

Councillors are required to prepare a report for Council by the second Council meeting after their return from travel outlining: purpose of conference, seminar, event or study tour, learning outcomes, applicable benefits to Casey, issues for consideration of Council, conclusion and recommendation.

4.3.3. Carer Expenses

Childcare and carer services can be claimed where the care is reasonably required for a Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform their role. The care provider should be qualified, and if caring for a child, should at a minimum have a valid working with children check. Payments for provision of childcare (for a minor under the age of 18 years) or carer services will not be made to a person;

- who normally lives with the child or Councillor/delegated committee member; or
- has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor/delegated committee member; or

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- when a Councillor's or Delegated members partner is the primary carer, and the partner is accompanying the Mayor, Councillor or Delegated Committee member to a Council business function.
- Care is to be provided through an approved program or by a registered provider, the amount on the official tax invoice will be paid by Council.

Claims for Carers expenses are guided by the meaning of a care relationship as defined within the *Carer's Recognition Act 2012.*

4.4. Reimbursement of Election Campaigns

Reimbursement of Councillor's out-of-pocket expenses will only apply to costs that have been incurred in the performance of normal Council duties and will not be provided for expenses that support or are connected with a Councillor's candidate election campaign.

4.5. Claiming Expenses

All expenses are to be claimed within three months of being incurred or upon return from the conference, event or study tour, whichever is the later date. Late claims will only be reimbursed subject to a resolution of Council.

Claims are to be made via the approved form and accompanied by proof of expenditure, including receipts.

All claims should relate to specific events that have previously been scheduled by the Office of Council team. Expenses incurred for the purchase of any alcoholic product will not be paid.

Expense claim forms should be forwarded to the Office of Council team, for approval. Reimbursement will be made via electronic funds transfer in the next payment cycle.

Expenses will not be reimbursed when related to any travel where a daily allowance has been paid through a calculation made under the Taxation Determination table by the Australian Taxation Office.

4.6. Departure of Councillors

The CEO will make arrangements for the collection of any equipment provided within the scope of this policy from a Councillor departing Council. The outcome of this process will be reported to the Audit & Risk Committee.

5. Responsibilities

Who	What
Head of Corporate Governance	Responsible for reporting on expenses incurred and reimbursement claims made to Audit & Risk Committee.
Chief Executive Officer	Responsible for approval and verification of interstate travel and care expense claims.
Team Leader Office of Council	Responsible for approval and verification of reimbursements.

6. Breaches

Any breaches of this policy will be handled in accordance with the;

1. Model Councillor Code of Conduct

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2. Councillor Internal Resolution Procedure

7. Relevant Forms

Title	Link
Councillor Expenses Claim Form	Councillor Expenses Claim Form
Councillor request to attend conference, event, seminar or training	Councillor Request to attend a Conference, Event, Seminar or Training Form – Casey Internal Forms

8. Document History

Date approved	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
16 September 2025	Major amendment	3.0	16 September 2029
16 April 2024	Document Update	2.0	18 April 2028
20 August 2020	Administrative amendments to the Version control of the document	1.1	18 August 2020
18 August 2020	Document initiation	1.0	18 August 2020