

Travel and Accommodation Policy - Members

MC08-CP (Superseded MC08-CP Travel & Accommodation Policy Members v7)

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1. Purpose

This document sets out MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) policy for paying for accommodation and travel for all members of Council Local Authorities and Committees of Council travelling on official Council business.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of Council, Local Authorities and Committees of Council (herein referred to as members).

3. Objectives

This policy is designed to:

- 3.1 outline the Council's responsibilities to reimburse accommodation, travel and incidental expenses;
- 3.2 ensure Council funds are properly used and accounted for;
- 3.3 ensure members are not financially disadvantaged as a result of carrying out their official duties; and
- 3.4 ensure that Council pays all reasonable and approved costs of travel and accommodation expenses (including meals) incurred by members where it is necessary to be away from home to attend legitimate Council business.

4. Statement

4.1 Accommodation and Travel Reimbursement Procedures

- 4.1.1 The Authorising Officer for member payments is the CEO, the Director of Corporate Services, the Manager, Governance and Compliance or the CEO's delegate in their absence.
- 4.1.2 Members can use their own mode of transport or arrange for the approved use of a Council vehicle in line with Council's Vehicle Policy and management guidelines.
- 4.1.3 For official Council travel, members must contact Council Governance staff to enable a Travel Requisition to be initiated and approved. Note that approval and reimbursement cannot be guaranteed for Travel Requisitions submitted after travel has been completed.
- 4.1.4 The Authorising Officer approving travel, will submit the Travel Requisition to Council's Finance Department for payment.
- 4.1.5 Members must advise of any changes to their initial travel arrangements.
- 4.1.6 If members are absent for the purposes of business they travelled for, or do not attend at all, they must repay any amounts paid to them for the travel through deductions from their next allowance payment. If attendance was at only part of the business travelled for, prepaid reimbursements must be repaid for the non-attendance time.
- 4.1.7 If members do not check in for accommodation that has been booked at their request, without due cause, they will need to repay any costs incurred by Council. Repayments will be deducted from future allowance payments made.

4.2 Accommodation Reimbursement

- 4.2.1 Except for emergency situations, accommodation will be prearranged and paid by MRC.

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- 4.2.2 Where possible, Council will try to ensure a security deposit is not required on arrival. On some occasions this will not be possible, and members will need to arrange to pay this deposit independently, keep a receipt and seek reimbursement as per 4.5.
- 4.2.3 Incurred Mini-bar, phone, room service, in-house movies and other incidental charges are members' responsibility.
- 4.2.4 Members are responsible for ensuring that any accommodation is maintained to a reasonable standard and are responsible for the financial costs and behaviour of their guests.
- 4.2.5 Council will only cover the cost of accommodation for the member. Any additional cost for family staying with a member, will be at the members own cost. Any costs incurred for damage or additional cleaning will be at the members cost. Council will seek reimbursement of all additional cost and these costs will be automatically deducted from the members next allowance payment.
- 4.2.6 Accommodation for the night before meetings, workshops, training etc. will not be arranged if the member has to travel less than 150km, unless the meeting is starting before 9.45am.

4.3 Meal Reimbursement

- 4.3.1 Where members are leaving home and returning in the same day on official travel, a breakfast or dinner meal reimbursement is not payable.
- 4.3.2 Where members are travelling overnight, their meal reimbursement accrues from the time they leave home and ceases from the time they arrive home, excluding any time not spent on officially approved business or travel.
- 4.3.3 Meal reimbursement is not payable for any meals covered through accommodation or by other parties including meals provided in meetings/conferences.
- 4.3.4 An allowance, where overnight travel is required, for the expected extra cost of purchasing meals and refreshments shall be as follows:

breakfast	\$	34.60
lunch	\$	39.00
dinner	\$	66.40
	\$	140.00

- 4.3.5 Any costs for meals and refreshments which exceed the daily amount are the members' responsibility.

4.4 Mileage Reimbursement for use of a Personal Vehicle

- 4.4.1 Personal vehicles can only be used with the approval of the authorising officer.
- 4.4.2 A mileage allowance will be paid, for use of a personal vehicle for travel on Council business, based on mileage travelled by a Member when the travel exceeds 50kms from home (100kms round trip), and is capped at \$5,000 per financial year.
- 4.4.3 Mileage allowances will be calculated at the per business kilometre rate set by the ATO.
- 4.4.4 Reimbursement for kilometres travelled will be based on the shortest possible route by gazetted (or where unavailable, locally recognised) roads, except where that route:
 - would involve travel along the Old Ghan Heritage Road between Finke and Titjikala or on the Sandy Blight Junction road between Kintore and Docker River

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- communities; or
- has been closed by the Northern Territory Roads Department; or
- has been closed for use by Council vehicles by the MRC Director of Technical Services or the CEO's delegate in their absence.

In this case the reimbursement will be based on the shortest possible alternative route. Where a member chooses to take a longer route, unless due to the above, reimbursement will be paid on the shorter route.

- 4.4.5 If a member chooses not to stay at their accommodation and travels home each night they will only be paid for one return trip.
- 4.4.6 Members who choose to travel in their own vehicle are not covered by the MRC motor vehicle insurance policy.

4.5 Excessive Mileage Allowance

- 4.5.1 The Remuneration Tribunal has ruled that a maximum of \$5,000 may be paid by way of a mileage allowance – this equates to 5,882kms at the rate of \$0.85 per kilometre. Elected members may be required to travel extreme distances in order to attend Council meetings or attend to Council business. This can result in the full mileage allowance being claimed once the elected member has travelled in excess of 5,882kms – the number of kilometres covered by “Mileage Reimbursement for use of a Personal Vehicle” – refer para 4.4.2.
- 4.5.2 In a situation such as this there is provision within the *Local Government Act 2019* (the Act) for Council to adopt a policy, subject to any limitations imposed by Council, entitling elected members to payment or reimbursement of reasonable expenses for travel necessary for attending meetings or attending to the business of Council. MRC will maintain a register of travel by elected members and at the point where the maximum of \$5,000 is paid the affected elected member will continue to complete a Members Travel Form MC01-FI and continue to be paid the appropriate mileage allowance.

4.6 Other Vehicle Reimbursements

Additionally elected members may be reimbursed for other vehicle expenses such as registration, vehicle repairs and tyres. The Member can claim on a proportionate basis at the end of the financial year by providing the following:

- the kilometres recorded on the Member's vehicle odometer at the time the full mileage allowance has been claimed;
- a record of kilometres travelled on approved Council business;
- receipts for all other vehicle expenses incurred during the period between when the full mileage allowance was claimed and the end of the financial year;
- the kilometres recorded on the Member's vehicle at the end of the financial year.

Reimbursement would then be made by calculating the percentage of distance travelled by the vehicle for Council business and applying that to the total of the receipts provided.

4.7 Incidentals

Council will reimburse, upon presentation of receipts, any approved and reasonable expenses seen as incidental to travel.

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4.8 Other travel

Where members are required to travel by air, bus or train on official Council business, the MRC will finalise all travel and accommodation payments.

4.9 Payments of Entitlements

- 4.9.1 50% of the meal and mileage allowances will be paid by electronic transfer before the meeting, with the remainder being paid by electronic transfer at the completion of the final meeting day.
- 4.9.2 Reimbursement of actual expenses incurred for fuel will be:
 - paid on the business day following the provision of the receipt to Council; or
 - by provision of a purchase order for the Community Store arranged by the Councillor prior to the meeting.
- 4.9.3 Reimbursement of other vehicle expenses incurred will be paid with the Member's allowances on the next scheduled fortnightly payment following the provision of receipts and all relevant kilometre readings being provided to Council.
- 4.9.4 If members are overpaid, recovery of the overpaid amount will be deducted from the member's next payment.
- 4.9.5 Members will not be reimbursed where a person chooses to use private accommodation (i.e. family).

5. Policy Details

Replaces Policy No: (if applicable)	MC08-CP Travel & Accommodation Policy – Members v7
Responsible Directorate/Department:	Corporate Services - Governance and Planning
Approval Date:	15 December 2023
Minutes Reference and Resolution No:	OCM Item # 15.14 – OCM2023-196
Review Cycle:	December 2027 - Review every four (4) years or after changes to relevant legislation.

6 Legislation and References

Related Legislation	<i>Local Government Act 2019</i>
Related Policies	MC03-CP Allowances – Elected Members Policy
Related Procedures	MC01-P2 Travel Expenses Procedure – Members
Related Documents	

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7. Version Control

Version No.	Approval Date	Policy No.	Minutes reference and Resolution number
1.	26 February 2016	CP109	OCM Item # 13.3 – OCM2016-012
2.	13 December 2019	FA03-CP	OCM Item # 15.7 – OCM2019-145
3.	26 August 2022	MC08-CP	OCM Item # 15.6 – OCM2022-130
4.	26 May 2023	MC08-CP	SCM Item # 19.2 – OCM2023-071
5.	30 June 2023	MC08-CP	OCM Item # 15.3 – OCM2023-093
6.	25 August 2023	MC08-CP	OCM Item # 15.2 – OCM2023-126
7.	27 October 2023	MC08-CP	OCM Item # 15.10 – OCM2023-162
8.	15 December 2023	MC08-CP	OCM Item # 15.14 – OCM2023-196