



WARRNAMBOOL  
CITY COUNCIL

# **Council Expenses Policy 2025**

APPROVAL DATE: March 2025

REVIEW DATE: March 2029

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

<b>Document Title:</b>	<i>Council Expenses Policy</i>
<b>Policy Type:</b>	<i>Council</i>
<b>Responsible Branch:</b>	<i>Governance</i>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<i>Manager Governance</i>
<b>Document Status:</b>	<i>Draft</i>
<b>Approved By:</b>	<i>Council</i>
<b>Approved Date:</b>	<i>March 2025</i>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<i>March 2029</i>

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Document Set ID: 11775726

Version: 2, Version Date: 30/04/2025

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Purpose

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) includes a specific requirement for Council to adopt and maintain an expenses policy in relation to the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses for Councillors.

The Act also requires that Council make available to the Mayor and the Councillors the resources and facilities reasonably necessary to enable them to effectively perform their role, as well as having requirements in relation to when indemnification must be provided to Councillors.

This Policy intends to establish clear expectations in the:

- Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors in the performance of their role.
- The resources and facilities that will be made available to the Mayor and Councillors to enable them to effectively perform their role.
- Provision of indemnification for Councillors

### 1.2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors and members of Delegated Committees in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred in performing their duties and functions and to all Councillors in relation to resources support and indemnification.

In instances of reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses 'Councillor' should be read to also include members of Delegated Committees.

## 2. POLICY

### Information Technology and Communications

Each Councillor will be provided with such information technology and communications equipment and stationery as is reasonably required to facilitate the effective performance of their role.

Council will meet the reasonable costs associated with the purchase, installation, service connection, maintenance, rental and usage of Council supplied communications equipment.

The particulars of the Council supplied information and communications equipment will be determined by the Chief Executive Officer on the advice of the Manager Information Services, but will include a:

- Smartphone with a call, text, and data plan included.
- Tablet computer with a suitable internet facility.

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- Suitable cases to protect the smartphone and tablet.
- Council email address linked to Council's electronic mail and calendar system.

Councillors will also be provided the option of being provided a:

- A multifunction colour printer.
- A digital stylus with touch and connectivity features.

Paper for reasonable use of a supplied printer will be provided upon request. For large documents and print jobs Councillors may contact the Chief Executive's office to arrange printing at the Civic Centre Offices at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

Council's Information Services department will provide basic support to Councillors in the use of Council provided information technology and communications equipment and software.

Council supplied communications equipment is intended to be used for Council business purposes. However, minimal personal use is acceptable, provided that the use is legal and appropriate, does not interfere with Council business, and involves no direct additional expense to Council.

Where significant personal use has occurred, the additional costs must be repaid to Council.

Council supplied information and communications equipment is part of Council's enterprise systems and as such is subject to Council's data security protocols and legislative obligations, including being subject to Freedom of Information Requests. Consequently, activity on information and communications equipment may be recorded, read, copied and disclosed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and policies.

### Office Access and Meeting Rooms

Councillors will be provided with a sticker to place in the front windscreen of their personal vehicles which will allow them to park at the Civic Centre carpark during business hours.

Each Councillor will receive a security pass allowing access from 9AM to 7PM to the Reception Room, Councillors Committee Room, Mayoral Office, and public areas of the Civic Centre. Arrangements for access outside of these times can be made by contacting the Chief Executive's office at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

Meeting rooms at the Civic Centre can be booked by Councillors for meetings associated with their role as a Councillor. These bookings can be made by contacting the Chief Executive's office.

### Staff Support

Limited administrative support will be provided to Councillors in connection to their role as a Councillor. This will include the distribution of agendas and event invitations, fielding general inquiries about Council business, bookings associated with conference attendance including registration, accommodation and travel, and other similar support.

Councillors will be provided advice on governance matters by the Manager Governance upon request.

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## Meals and Refreshments

Councillors will be provided basic facilities at Council meetings including coffee, tea, and biscuits.

At the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or delegate, Councillors may be provided meals or catering if meetings are to extend over an extended period, extend over normal meal times, or are likely to conclude at a late hour.

At the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or delegate, Councillors may be provided meals where a Councillor is undertaking Council business that requires them to be outside the Warrnambool City Council Municipal Boundaries during normal meal times or over an extended period. Alternatively, Councillors may also have their reasonable meal expenses reimbursed in this scenario through making an expenses reimbursement claim to Council, however the amount reimbursed will not exceed the relevant expense limitations set by the Australian Tax Office.

The types of refreshments, meals, or catering that will be provided to Council will be determined by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate. Factors relevant to the determination include community expectations, value for money, the nature of the meeting, the invitees, and the length and location of the meeting.

Council will not provide alcohol for Councillors using Council resources.

## Travel

All travel undertaken by Councillors must be for a legitimate Council business reason or be related to the Councillor's training and development.

Interstate travel arrangements are to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor. International travel by Councillors must be approved by Council resolution prior to its occurrence.

A Councillor travelling for official Council business or attending a conference, seminar, event, or training course as an authorised representative of Council is entitled to have all reasonable expenses for transport, accommodation, registration fees, meals and other necessary associated out of pocket expenses reimbursed or paid on their behalf.

Where overnight accommodation is required, the Chief Executive's office will arrange booking and payment for a Councillor's accommodation at an appropriate nearby venue.

If flights are required, the Chief Executive's office will make bookings and arrange payments. For interstate travel, Councillors will be provided economy tickets. For international travel, Councillors will be provided premium economy if available, otherwise the class of travel will be economy.

## Apparel and Protective Clothing

Councillors will be provided with an official Warrnambool City Council name badge.

Council will make protective equipment available to Councillors as required to assist in carrying out the duties of office. This equipment is to be returned promptly upon the completion of the activity for which the equipment was required.

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## Mayoral Resources

In addition to the resources and facilities provided to all Councillors, the Mayor will also be provided with a furnished office with a desktop computer and a full private use vehicle in accordance with Council's fleet policy.

The vehicle is associated with the office of the Mayor, rather than the incumbent Mayor. The Mayoral vehicle is passed from one Mayor to the next. The commencement of a new Mayor does not necessitate the purchase of a new Mayoral vehicle.

The Mayoral vehicle may be driven by the Mayor, the Mayor's partner, or a Councillor or Council officer on the Mayor's behalf.

A designated car parking space is provided for the Mayoral vehicle at the Civic Centre.

For the purpose of civic functions and ceremonies, the Mayor will be provided with ceremonial clothing including Mayoral robes and chains of office.

## Return of Council Supplied Equipment for Councillors

Councillors must return all Council supplied communications equipment and any items which bear the Council's logo to the CEO or delegate one week prior to a general Council election.

In the event of the resignation, retirement, suspension or disqualification of a Councillor, the Councillor must return to the CEO or delegate all Council supplied communications equipment and any items which bear the Council's logo. Equipment surrendered to Council because of a suspension will be returned to the Councillor at the conclusion of the suspension.

## 3. TRAINING AND EDUCATION EXPENSES AND EVENTS FOR COUNCILLORS

It is desirable that Councillors undertake appropriate training and professional development throughout their term of office. Whilst some training is provided in-house, it is important that Councillors are able to attend other relevant forums, to further develop their understanding of the many issues faced within local government, and to network with other Councillors. Accordingly, Councillors are entitled to have paid for or reimbursed expenses incurred through attending recognised and industry approved conferences, seminars, events, study and training courses that are relevant to their role, and which provide a significant professional development opportunity to the benefit of Council.

### Councillor Induction Program, Mandatory Annual Training, and In-House Training

The Act requires that Councillors undertake an extensive Councillor Induction Program and mandatory annual training on matters prescribed in *the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*. Council officers may on occasion also arrange in-house training for Councillors relevant matters such as media or governance.

Both this mandated and in-house training will be arranged by Council and the associated costs of this training will be borne by Council without affecting the Individual Councillor training and development budget.

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### Individual Councillor Training and Budget Allocation

A specific Councillor training and education allocation may be made in the Council's annual budget to meet or reimburse Councillors' reasonable costs associated with relevant training, education and professional development.

Councillors will have an overall training and development cap of \$14,000 each for the 2024-2028 Council term. Expenditure for training and development greater than this amount can be approved by Council resolution.

Councillors may, subject to approval by the Chief Executive Officer, use this budget to partake in any of the following:

- Attendance at conferences and seminars.
- Professional membership fees associated with appropriate organisations such as the MAV, VLGA, ALGA etc.
- Councillor specific training programs offered by the MAV or other bodies.
- Formal study through bodies like the Australian Institute of Company Directors or Universities.
- Other relevant training identified by the Councillor and approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

## 4. INSURANCES AND INDEMINITY

### Indemnification

In accordance with section 43 of the Act, Council will indemnify Councillors against all actions or claims, as long as the acts giving rise to the action or claim were done in good faith and related to the Councillor's or official duties and functions. Council will maintain appropriate insurance for these purposes.

In accordance with section 43A of the Act, Council will not indemnify Councillors for legal costs incurred by a Councillor as a result of:

- An application for an internal arbitration process or an application to a Councillor Conduct Panel.
- A process or proceeding relating to an application for an internal arbitration process or an application to a Councillor Conduct Panel.
- A decision or determination made by an arbiter on finding misconduct or a decision or determination made by a Councillor Conduct Panel.

### WorkCover

A Councillor injured while carrying out their Council duties may be entitled to claim workers compensation under the *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013*.

Each workers compensation claim will be determined based on its individual circumstances and merit.

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Councillors may make a workers compensation claim in accordance under *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013* and the relevant Council policies and procedures.

### 5. REIMBURSEMENT OF COUNCILLOR EXPENSES

Councillors are entitled under section 40 of the Act to the reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties.

Councillors will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that are:

- Bona fide expenses; and
- Have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of councillor; and
- Are reasonably necessary for the councillor to perform this role.

#### Travel and General Expenses

Councillors will be eligible for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses associated with travel, accommodation, meals, fees and expenses incurred in conducting official Council business outside the municipality.

Councillors travelling outside the municipality by car should first seek to use a Council pool car or the Mayoral vehicle or make other travel arrangements through the Chief Executive office. However, if a personal vehicle is used Councillors may make a per kilometre claim in line with the relevant Australian Tax Office determination.

#### Carer and Dependent-Related Expenses

The cost of care for a dependent child aged under 14 years, or a person who is in a care relationship pursuant to section 4 of *the Carers Recognition Act 2012*, may be claimed by a Councillor where:

- the expense is incurred to enable the Councillor to perform their official duties and functions; and
- the child or person who requires care:
  - a. resides in the Councillor's household and the Councillor is the primary carer; or
  - b. is a person in respect of whom the Councillor is entitled to a Commonwealth Carer Payment or Allowance; or
  - c. is a person for whom the Councillor's partner is the primary carer, when the partner is accompanying the Councillor to a Council business function;

and

- the care is provided by:
  - a. a registered care provider; or

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- b. a person who does not reside with the Councillor or Delegated Committee member, and who does not have a familial or similar relationship with the Councillor or Delegated Committee member (eg. partner, mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, grandparent, sister-in-law, brother-in-law).

A claim for reimbursement of carer expenses must include the details of the meeting or Council business that was undertaken during the period of care, and must be substantiated by a tax invoice or receipt from the care provider which includes the dates and times when the care was provided, the care provider's signature and ABN (where relevant).

Where care is provided by a registered care provider, Council will reimburse the amount on the official tax invoice.

Care that is not provided by a registered care provider will be reimbursed at a maximum rate of \$25 per hour.

### Claiming expenses

Expenses must be claimed within 60 days of being incurred.

An expense claim must be:

- made on the appropriate claim form;
- accompanied by proof of expenditure, such as a tax invoice; and
- signed by the councillor or delegated committee member, to declare the nature of the council business and to verify that the claim is accurate and complies with the relevant legislative provisions and council policy.

Councillors' expense claims will be assessed by the Governance Team and processed as quickly as possible so that Councillors receive rapid reimbursement for all reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of performing their official duties and functions.

Late claims and claims without a sufficient connection to Council business will not be accepted.

## 6. GOVERNANCE

### 6.1. Owner

The Manager Governance is responsible for ensuring this procedure is implemented, progress is monitored and is regularly reviewed.

### 6.2. Review

The Manager Governance will review the procedure for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after its formulation or after the last review.

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