MURRAY RIVER COUNCIL

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION POLICY

POL202.V1

ADOPTED: 26 March 2019
1. POLICY SUMMARY

1.1 The Travel and Accommodation Policy (the ‘Policy’) outlines travel and accommodation requirements for all Murray River Council (the ‘Council’) elected members, employees and all other persons authorised to undertake business travel on behalf of Council.

1.2 Business related travel includes training, meetings and conferences and special events related to Council business; and events attended as the nominated representative of the Council. It does not include attendance at events in any other role or representation.

1.3 Nominated representation by elected members will be determined by the Council, with travel approved by the General Manager. Nominated representation by staff will be determined by the General Manager.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objectives of this Policy are to:

► Clarify Council’s responsibilities to meet accommodation, travel and incidental expenses for Council employees, elected members and other authorised persons whilst on approved Council business.

► Ensure that Council representatives provide clear accounting for travel expenditures and are not financially disadvantaged as a result of business travel requirements.

► Maximise the effectiveness of travel budgets available to Council and ensure accountability and effective use of public monies is maintained.

► Meet annual reporting requirements set out in the Local Government Act 1993 (the ‘Act’) and Local Government (General) Regulations 2005 (the ‘Regulations’).

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Approval of all international travel and accommodation undertaken for Council business will be exclusively by the resolution of the Council.

3.2 All other business travel for Council employees may be approved by the following delegates under their direct line supervision and in accordance with financial delegations:

(a) Mayor
(b) General Manager
(c) Director.
For example, travel by the General Manager's must be approved by the Mayor; travel by a Director must be approved by the General Manager; and travel by a Council officer must be approved by the relevant Director.

3.3 All elected members travel must be approved by the General Manager or, in his/her absence, the Director Corporate Services.

4. LEGISLATION, TERMINOLOGY & REFERENCES

4.1 In this Policy, international travel means travel outside of the Australian states and territories.

4.2 In this Policy, a reference to a price or purchase value is intended to be inclusive of Goods and Services Tax (Incl.GST).

4.3 For the General Manager/a Director, allowance rates from the Australian Tax Office (ATO) determination apply when required to work away from their usual work location, generally with an overnight stay required.

4.4 For all other Council employees, Award rates apply to meals and travel from the employee’s usual work location.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND DELEGATION

5.1 Travel Authorisation

5.1.1 All Council employees and other authorised persons must receive prior written approval, normally in the form of a properly completed and authorised Travel Authorisation Form (DOC/17/643). All requests for accommodation and travel allowances shall be signed as supported by the relevant Manager/Supervisor and approved by the Mayor, General Manager or relevant Director. Elected members’ and Directors’ travel shall be authorised by the General Manager.

5.1.2 A Director approving business travel and related expenses must ensure that funds are available under the relevant budget line item/s and provide appropriate finance codes.

5.1.3 Incomplete Travel Authorisation Forms will not be processed and will be returned to the employee or manager. Failure to gain prior written approval for travel may result in reimbursement claims being refused.

5.1.4 In the event of an emergency or in unforeseen circumstances, every effort must be made by the traveller to seek approval by the Travel Authorisation Form, by phone, by email or SMS from the General Manager or relevant Director during business hours or by contacting them after hours, if necessary. Phone approvals must be followed by a properly approved Travel Authorisation Form with a covering memo outlining the reasons for post-travel approval.

5.2 Airfares

5.2.1 Airfares will be booked using details provided on the Travel Authorisation Form. All domestic travel bookings should be the best economy airfare or best travel time for the event that is available, unless there is a good cause for booking a flexible fare. Where possible, airfares will be booked for travel during daylight hours.
5.2.2 For airline travel, cancellation policies may vary depending on the classification of the ticket purchased. The terms and conditions of cancellations are provided on the ticket document issued. It is the responsibility of the traveller to familiarise themselves with the cancellation procedures that apply to their bookings.

5.2.3 Penalties apply for cancellations and, where the terms and conditions for cancellations are not followed, the penalty to the traveller may be required to repay the full price of the airfare.

5.3 **Frequent Flyer points**

5.3.1 Flights organised by Council and paid for in accordance with this Policy cannot accrue frequent flyer points unless they can be applied for the benefit of Council in either reducing the cost of travel or benefitting the Council in other ways.

5.4 **Road travel outside of Council’s area**

5.4.1 Council vehicles may be used for travel outside of the Council area and the availability of a Council pool vehicle. Vehicles must be used in accordance with Council’s Light Motor Vehicle Policy (POL302).

5.4.2 Toll fee accounts are provided for the Mayor, General Manager and Directors’ vehicles, plus other specified vehicles approved by the General Manager.

5.4.3 Other Council vehicles used for Council business that need to have a toll pass will have a temporary pass arranged for the period of travel.

5.5 **Use of private vehicles on Council business**

5.5.1 Use of private motor vehicles on Council business should only be undertaken when there is no Council vehicle available, or by specific elected member/employee request, with approval of the General Manager or relevant Director. Reimbursement will be paid under the Award rates or otherwise agreed with the General Manager or relevant Director.

5.5.2 If using a private motor vehicle, the vehicle must be properly registered with proof of current registration and comprehensive car insurance supplied to Council before the travel is undertaken.

5.5.3 Elected members using their private motor vehicle on Council business will be reimbursed as per Council’s Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy (POL103).

5.5.4 An elected member or employee approved to use a private motor vehicle on Council business accepts full responsibility for their vehicle.

5.6 **Accommodation**

5.6.1 When travel is required away from home, for a period requiring overnight absence, Council will pay accommodation costs. Accommodation is only payable for authorised overnight Council business and no cash advance is payable. Should a Council employee choose to extend their stay for personal reasons, either travelling earlier than required or staying extra days, accommodation and meal allowances will not be paid for any additional nights spent away.

5.6.2 All accommodation, where practicable, should be booked through preferred providers. The selection of accommodation will be based on cost, proximity to the venue to be visited on Council business and availability. All accommodation should be booked at Government Rates or better, up to 3½ star rating. An exception may be made where the event is being held at 4 star accommodation or a daily rate is less than $140/night.
5.6.3 Where possible, and cost effective, accommodation may be booked to include meals, eg accommodation with breakfast included. No meal allowance will be paid for these meals when this occurs.

5.6.4 The Manager Office of the General Manager will book accommodation for elected members, the General Manager and in some cases, for a Director, where a Council event is being held that is attended by Councillors and Senior Staff. Travel for all other employees will be booked by administration staff of the respective departments.

5.6.5 Holders of Council issued corporate credit cards may book accommodation direct, once travel has been approved using the Travel Authorisation Form. All booking confirmations should be kept as receipt of payment and a tax invoice is required to process corporate credit card purchases (as per the internal Murray River Council Corporate Credit Card Policy (POL204)).

5.7 **Travel/Meal allowance**

5.7.1 A daily travel (meal and expenses) allowance may be paid to Council employees travelling on Council business. To be entitled to travel allowances, the traveller must be away for a minimum of one (1) night from their primary place of residence.

5.7.2 Meals provided as part of a conference, training or other business event cannot be claimed as an allowance.

5.7.3 Travel and meal allowances for Council employees shall be paid in accordance with the current Award rates.

5.7.4 Elected members may claim meal reimbursement of actuals up to the current ATO travel allowance rates.

5.7.5 No alcohol can be claimed as travel or meal allowance while travelling for Council business, unless approved by the General Manager.

5.7.6 Should a Council employee choose to extend their stay for personal reasons (either post or prior extension), travel allowances will only be paid from or up to the time the employee would have left or arrived home. Any additional accommodation or meals must be paid by the employee.

5.7.7 The payment of travel allowance does not apply to those Council employees who hold a Council-issued corporate credit card and elect to pay expenses rather than claim travel allowance. Corporate credit card holders should refer to Council’s internal Corporate Credit Card Policy (POL204), but should be mindful of the allowances otherwise payable when incurring expenses.

5.8 **Other travel expenses**

5.8.1 Council will pay other reasonable travel costs incurred by an elected member or Council employee, which may include:

(i) Taxi and public transport fares
(ii) Parking costs while on Council business
(iii) Excess baggage costs for Council goods only (excess personal baggage will not be paid for personal items)
(iv) Postal costs for Council business
(v) Internet costs, eg emails to Council when without access to Council’s system
(vi) Telephone costs for Council business when without access to a Council-issued mobile telephone
(vii) Meal costs for travellers using corporate credit cards when a meal has been purchased from an outlet where cards are not accepted.

5.8.2 The costs referred to in 5.8.1 will be reimbursed upon provision of a tax invoice and a properly completed and authorised Staff Reimbursement Claim Form (DOC/17/639).
5.9 Changes and cancellation of prepaid travel arrangements
5.9.1 Council recognises that, from time to time, circumstances may arise that require changes to, and cancellation of, prepaid travel arrangements such as airfares.
5.9.2 To maximise the effectiveness of travel budgets, changes to, and cancellations of, travel arrangements must be kept to a minimum.
5.9.3 All persons travelling on Council business, including elected members, current and potential Council employees, guests and consultants, must:
   (i) be informed in advance of procedures for varying and cancelling travel arrangements; and
   (ii) seek prior approval to change and cancel airfares and accommodation.
5.9.4 The General Manager or relevant Director responsible for approving the initial travel arrangements may approve changes and cancellations.
5.9.5 In an emergency or due to other constraints, where cancellations have been made without prior approval as referred to in 5.9.4, a written report must be submitted to the General Manager or relevant Director outlining the reasons for the changes or cancellation. Failure to provide an explanation for changing travel arrangements may lead to Council seeking reimbursement of penalties incurred.

5.10 International travel
5.10.1 If an elected member of Council employee is required to travel overseas on Council related business, the Council will pay the following expenses:
   (i) Passport and application fees
   (ii) Vaccinations, if recommended by the World Health Organisation for the particular destination
   (iii) Visa fees
   (iv) International travel insurance
   (v) Airport taxes.
5.10.2 Meal and incidental allowances will be paid as per the rates determined by the ATO for the country or countries visited. Such travel must also be approved in accordance with the Regulation.
5.10.3 International travel undertaken by elected members or Council employees must be detailed in Council’s Annual Report. The Manager Office of the General Manager will maintain a register of overseas travel for the Council with enough detail to allow for reporting in accordance with the requirements of the Regulation.
5.10.4 Elected members of Council employees intending to travel overseas on official Council business must provide details of their travel to Council’s Manager Risk to ensure coverage under the Council’s insurance policy and also to obtain 24 hour contact details for emergencies.

5.11 Monitoring employee travel
5.11.1 For safety reasons as well as courtesy to colleagues whose day to day work relates to the performance of the duties of other employees, it is essential that an employee’s whereabouts and contact details are available to their Manager/Supervisor and others.
5.11.2 When working off-site, whether within the Council area or travelling outside the Council area, Council employees shall ensure that their travel plans and/or absence from their primary place of work during Council business hours are displayed on the appropriate office white board or on the electronic In/Out Board.
6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

6.1 It is the responsibility of the Director Corporate Services to monitor the adequacy of this Policy and recommend appropriate changes.

6.2 This Policy will be formally reviewed every three (3) years or as needed, whichever comes first.

7. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Murray River Council Code of Conduct (POL100)
- Murray River Council Delegations of Authority (General Manager to Staff) Policy (POL107)
- Murray River Council Corporate Credit Card Policy (POL204)
- Murray River Council Light Motor Vehicle Policy (POL302)

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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<th>Version No.</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Resolution No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Initial Issue – On 12 May 2016, the Premier of NSW, The Hon Mike Baird MP, made the Local Government (Council Amalgamations) Proclamation 2016 under the Local Government Act 1993, whereby Murray Shire Council and Wakool Shire Council were amalgamated to constitute the new area to be known as Murray River Council, effective immediately.</td>
<td>26 March 2019</td>
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Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy at any time
This Policy is scheduled for review in March 2022