1.0 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Policy is to establish clear guidelines for travel and accommodation arrangements for Council employees attending official Council business.

This Policy applies to:

- all local, intrastate, interstate and overseas travel undertaken and/or attended by Central Highlands Regional Council employees as part of their official Council duties (excepting trainees, cadets and apprentices);
- accommodation associated with such attendance; and
- all official travel and other necessary incidental / out of pocket expenses associated with such attendance.

2.0 Reference

Local Government Act 2009
Local Government Regulation 2012

3.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Approval Officer means the Chief Executive Officer, General Managers or Managers (MT).

Chief Executive Officer means Chief Executive Officer of the Central Highlands Regional Council.

Conference means a destination, event, tour, seminar, conference or meeting attended by a Council Officer for professional development or other business related activities from which a benefit to Council is derived.

Council means Central Highlands Regional Council.

Employee means an employee of the Central Highlands Regional Council, including elected members.

Training means further education and development where a Certificate of Attainment is received.

Travel means the mode of transportation employed and the time incurred in the reaching of and return from a prescribed destination, event, seminar, conference or meeting.

Travel Booking Officer (TBO) means the person responsible for organising travel and accommodation arrangements. This may be any Manager, General Manager, Personal Assistant or specific selected employees appointed by their General Manager.
For travel associated with the mandatory training budget, the TBO will be from the Learning and Development unit.

**The Act** shall mean the *Local Government Act 2009* (as amended).

**The Regulation** shall mean the *Local Government Regulation 2012* (as amended).

### 4.0 Policy Statement

This Policy establishes clear guidelines for the attendance at conferences, meetings, seminars and training and the reimbursement of approved expenses at these events.

Where an employee is required to travel (either for training or business travel) within the Central Highlands Regional Council boundaries, other than those entitlements under the relevant Award and Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, this policy *does not* apply. However, where there are extenuating circumstances, the General Manager of the department can approve entitlements within the boundaries of this policy. The general rule is where an employee is required to leave their usual place of work before 5.30am and return to their usual place of work after 9.00pm, they may request the provisions in this policy using the Travel, Accommodation & Meals within Business Duties Form seeking prior approval.

Council endeavours to provide the best possible service to employees who are travelling on behalf of Council, while ensuring, at all times, accountability of public monies is maintained and that travel and conference arrangements are administered in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

All Council travel and conference arrangements are to be organised through a Travel Booking Officer. No travel will be booked unless the appropriate ‘Training and Development Application Form’, ‘Travel, Accommodation & Meals within Business Duties Form’ and Conference ‘Registration Forms’, if applicable, have been duly completed and approved.

Consideration must be given by the Approval Officer to the value and benefit to Council of the topics on the conference agenda and budget allocation before deciding whether or not to approve.

### 5.0 Application

#### Travel and Accommodation Arrangements

**Air Travel**

All airline bookings are made with respect to convenience of scheduling, and where practical, to take advantage of discounted air fares. The standard of all air travel shall be economy class, other than where officers are required to travel on long range international flights and then only varied with the explicit approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

**Accommodation**

Accommodation will be booked, taking into consideration availability, cost and proximity to business appointments. Wherever practicable, accommodation will be arranged at the conference or course venue. Where accommodation is not included in a package, the standard of accommodation shall be appropriately priced business class accommodation, e.g. and is 3 or 4 star accommodation or equivalent.

**International Travel**

Council must be informed of all conference and course attendance where the venue is outside Australia. It is the responsibility of the applicant, supported and approved by the Chief Executive Officer and Approval Officer, to ensure an appropriate committee agenda item is prepared in advance to ensure appropriate time is allowed for the approval process and consequent arrangements to be made.
Fees for traveller's cheques, visas, currency conversion, travel insurance and immunisation expenses shall be reimbursed by Council. Receipts must be submitted as supporting documentation.

Delegation of approval for international travel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traveller</th>
<th>Approval</th>
<th>Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Council resolution</td>
<td>Decision Action report to General Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other executive staff</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Information report to General Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>CEO (Supported by General Manager)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to and including Coordinator level</td>
<td>CEO (Supported by General Manager)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Frequent Flyer or Reward Programs**

Points from loyalty programs accumulated by employees on their personal rewards program, whilst travelling on official Council business, should not be used for personal gain unless otherwise allowed in a contract of employment.

Any employee who accumulates sufficient points in accordance with this clause, should redeem such points, where possible, for travel on official Council business.

Staff members are permitted to use benefits accrued on Council business to upgrade to a higher class of air travel if the cost to the Council is not increased by the upgrade. The use of points should not override the Council's 'best fare' available policy.

**Allowable Expenditure**

Allowable expenses for seminar, conference, course, or training will include: Motor Vehicle, Vehicle Hire, Parking & Associated Fees, Public Transport / Taxi Fares, Laundry and Dry Cleaning, Business Telephone Calls/ Facsimiles and Postage, Personal Telephone Calls and Calls from Mobile Phones and Meals. Further details around these expenses below.

**Motor Vehicle**

Use of private motor vehicles is not encouraged and should only be utilised where no other means of transport is available, practical or economical. The Chief Executive Officer or Approval Officer must approve the use of a private vehicle to attend a conference, course etc in advance.

Where an employee has approval to utilise his or her own private vehicle to attend a conference, course etc the employee shall be entitled to an allowance as per the award that employee is paid under for mileage claims. The distance travelled and/or the starting and ending speedometer readings will be detailed on the appropriate claim form. The use of private vehicles for Council business will only be acceptable where every effort to use Council vehicles has been explored in advance of its required need. It should be noted that Council insurance does not cover private vehicles used for Council business.

The Kilometric allowance will be paid on the total travel taken and shall include:

- Travel from a person’s home and the location they have been required to attend (either the accommodation or work location, whichever is attended sooner).
- Return travel between the work location and accommodation each day.
- Return travel from a person’s work location or accommodation (whichever is attended last) and that person’s home.
Vehicle Hire

Vehicle hire for conference use may be requested on the Travel Application Form.

Parking and Associated Fees

Where a vehicle incurs parking fees and the like for an employee to attend a conference, course etc the cost will be reimbursed by Council (excluding infringement notices). Supporting receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

Please ensure that a receipt is requested at the time of payment. This receipt is required for reimbursement.

Public Transport/Taxi Fares

The cost of travel for legitimate Council business, conference, meeting, seminar etc will be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

Airtrain tickets are recommended to be used where available and appropriate. Council will not cover public transport/taxi fares for personal matters, i.e. shopping, visiting friends/relatives, etc.

Laundry/Dry Cleaning

Reasonable laundry/dry cleaning may be claimed for travel of more than six (6) consecutive nights and will only be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

Business Telephone Calls, Facsimiles and Postage

Official business telephone calls, modem and internet connections, facsimiles and correspondence, photocopying and postage are allowable and will be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

Personal Telephone Calls and Calls from Mobile Phones

Council recognises the personal sacrifice of travelling for Council business and the impact it has on family life. In recognition of this, limited personal calls each day will be allowed.

Meals

For the cost of meals, if not included as part of the conference/seminar/accommodation package, Council will reimburse staff reasonable meal expenses on production of tax invoice/receipt up to a maximum of:

- Breakfast $25.00 including GST
- Lunch $25.00 including GST
- Dinner $43.00 including GST

These limits are per meal type and cannot be combined as a part or a full day amount or averaged over a number of days.

Reimbursement will be made by the staff member providing valid tax invoices to Council and completing a travel expense reimbursement claim form. If the value of the tax invoice is greater than the reasonable meal expense, the Council will only reimburse the staff member to that value of the limit set above.

If the meal expense has been paid for using a Council credit card, the staff member must reimburse Council for any costs in excess of the reasonable meal expense limit.
Where Council has provided a purchase order to cover meals the staff member must adhere to the limits or reimburse Council for any additional meal costs in excess of the reasonable meal expense limit.

Council will not reimburse meal expense where meals were provided as part of an accommodation package or conference, workshop, training or other work related function except where special dietary requirements were not catered for.

Non Allowable Expenditure

- Alcohol
- Alcoholic drinks, snacks and other costs associated with the mini bar will not be paid for by Council.
- Tips and gratuities
- Applying for or renewing passports
- Airline club fees other than approved by the Chief Executive Officer
- Excess baggage claims
- Traffic parking fines
- Travel costs not applicable to the conference/approved event
- In-flight and in-house movies
- In-house or external entertainment not directly related to the conference/approved event
- Personal gifts, goods or services purchased

Should travel time be extended by the employee for personal reasons beyond what is necessary for the purposes of the authorised travel, all additional costs will be the responsibility of the traveller. As a guide, expenses not normally reimbursed at home, will not be reimbursed when travelling.

Reimbursements

Where expenses are in excess of the allowable cost, the employee is required to meet the excess cost of the meal and or accommodation.

Where an employee holds a corporate credit card, the employee will utilise the credit card for expenses whilst travelling on Council business to the amounts allowable only. If the amounts exceed the allowable limit for claim, the employee will be required to reimburse the additional cost on reconciliation of the corporate credit card.

6.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. As required by Legislation.
2. The related documents are amended or replaced.
3. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than four (4) years.