

TITLE:	Travel and Accommodation Policy – Council Staff		
DIVISION:	Corporate		
ADOPTED BY:	Council		
DATE OF ADOPTION:	14 September 2017	DATE OF REVIEW:	Annually
MOTION NUMBER:	OC 157/17		
POLICY NUMBER:	CP000045		
AUTHORISED:	Barkly Regional Council		

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

All employees of the Barkly Regional Council.

SUMMARY

Council employees are entitled to be reimbursed for costs of meals and accommodation if travelling away from their place of work when on authorised Council business which may include meetings, training or working at a location other than their normal workplace. This Policy establishes how allowances are set, the eligibility for allowances, how travel is authorised and how allowances may be claimed.

OBJECTIVES

In the normal course of their duties Barkly Regional Council employees may be required to travel away from their normal work place – for example, to attend a meeting or for training. In such circumstances employees are entitled to be reimbursed for costs of meals and accommodation. The intent of this policy is to establish clear and transparent procedures in relation to establishing the quantum of allowances and to determine eligibility for allowances, how travel is authorised and how allowances may be claimed.

BACKGROUND

In the normal course of their duties Barkly Regional Council staff may be required to travel away from their normal work place – for example, to attend a meeting or for training. In such circumstances employees are entitled to be reimbursed for costs of meals and accommodation.

POLICY STATEMENT

Eligibility and payment - overnight travel

Where an employee, in the course of employment, is required to travel away from their workplace which extends overnight the Council may:

- Provide at no cost to the employee, reasonable accommodation or meals, or both accommodation and meals; or
- Pay a travelling allowance to the employee in respect of accommodation or meals, or both accommodation and meals;

in addition, pay an allowance for incidental expenses incurred or likely to be incurred by the employee.

Payment where travel is not overnight

Where an employee, in the course of employment, is required to travel away from their workplace but which does not extend overnight the Council may:

- Reimburse an employee costs necessarily incurred; or
- Provide a travelling allowance for meals taken due to that travel.

This provision does not apply in circumstances where the travel undertaken is undertaken as part of the employee's normal duties which are regularly performed away from their normal base.

Travel costs

Where an employee, in the course of employment, is required to travel away from their workplace the Council will meet the actual transportation cost of airfares and pay a rate per kilometre where an employee travels in their personal vehicle.

This provision does not apply in circumstances where a Council vehicle is available and the employee has chosen not to use it.

ELIGIBILITY

BRC employees are entitled to be reimbursed for costs of meals and accommodation if travelling away from their place of work when on authorised Council business which may include meetings, training or working at a location other than their normal workplace.

To be eligible for travel allowance the travel must be authorised **in advance** (utilising the 'Authority to Travel' form) by:

- The CEO (in the case of Directors),
- The CEO (in the case of Community Coordinators and Tennant Creek based staff)
- The CEO or a Director or the Community Coordinator in the case of staff based other than in Tennant Creek.

Travelling Allowance is not payable where the employee is absent from the temporary duty locality during any period of leave, whether paid or unpaid.

Allowances are only claimable by the employee if they are using personal funds to procure food, accommodation or travel costs and are not claimable where BRC or any other provider or agency is paying for the food or accommodation or providing the transport.

PROCEDURE

A *Travel Request Form* is to be submitted for approval in advance of the travel supported where applicable by estimated costs (airfare quotation, hotel name/rate etc.). Where travel is sought in relation to training - evidence that the training has been approved is also to be provided.

Payment in Advance

If Travel Allowance is to be paid in advance this should be noted on the *Travel Request Form* and must be approved by the authorising officer. Allowances will be paid by direct deposit into the employee's nominated bank account.

Where Travel Allowance has been paid in advance and, for some reason, the travel does not occur it is the responsibility of the employee to reimburse the money within five working days and the responsibility of the authorising officer to confirm that this has occurred. Failure to reimburse an advance within the five days specified or to confirm that the funds have been reimbursed will be treated as a serious breach of policy. Disciplinary action may include, but not be limited to: formal warning, cost recovery, Police report and / or criminal proceedings.

Payment in Arrears

Claims must be made in a timely manner so that control over expenditure can be maintained. Travel Allowance must be claimed within 14 days of the Travel occurring. In special circumstances the CEO may approve payment of claims submitted after 14 days of the travel occurring however claims made after 60 days will not be paid. Receipts must be provided to support claims in all circumstances except where this is not possible due to the situation (locality).

ALLOWANCES

Accommodation

The Council will meet the reasonable cost of overnight accommodation.

Allowance	Rate
Accommodation	Corporate or Flat rate arranged by the Executive Assistant
Breakfast	\$24.25 per day – travel occurs before 8am
Lunch	\$27.65 per day – travel occurs between 12 – 2pm
Dinner	\$47.70 per day – travel occurs after 6pm
Incidentals	\$19.35 per day

Table above based on the ATO's – Tax Determination TD2017-2019 & Taxation Ruling TR 2004/6

Motor Vehicle Expenses	Rate
Kilometre rate	\$0.66 per kilometre (use of private vehicle)

Table above from ATO – Motor Vehicle Expenses

Commercial accommodation: Where possible accommodation should be pre-booked at a hotel or staff accommodation at a community. BRC will meet the actual cost of accommodation to a pre-determined maximum. Accommodation costs in excess of the pre-determined cap will only be met if prior approval of the CEO has been granted.

Other: Because of the nature of the Council area it may be necessary for staff to camp out (attracting an *under the stars allowance*) or on the floor of a crowded staff house (but not in a bed) (*swagging allowance*). Staff may also elect to stay with friends in which case and a *non-commercial accommodation allowance* will be paid.

Allowance	Rate
Camping	\$134.00 per night
Swagging	\$55.50 per night

No allowance is provided if employees are staying in staff housing but are providing their own linen and pillow.

Travel

BRC will meet the actual cost of airfares and pay a rate per kilometre where an employee travels in their personal vehicle unless a Council vehicle is available and the employee has chosen not to use it. Use of a private vehicle is only permissible where a suitable BRC vehicle is not available.

Meal Allowance

For travel occurring before 8am, between 12 and 2pm and after 6pm a meal allowance will be payable in respect of each meal.

Meal allowance will not be paid where a meal is provided (e.g. Employees attending a Council meeting where lunch is provided or employees staying in commercial accommodation where breakfast is included in the room rate).

Incidental Allowance

Where travel occurs overnight an incidental allowance will be payable to cover incidental costs.

QUANTUM

If a current Enterprise Agreement exists which establishes the quantum of allowances – travel and accommodation expenses will be met at the rate specified in that agreement.

If no current Enterprise agreement exists – travel and accommodation expenses will be met at a rate determined annually by resolution of the Council.

In the event that the Council has not determined a rate then allowances are to be paid at the rate specified in the relevant *Australian Taxation Office Taxation Determination* establishing the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts for the relevant financial year. Where there is no Council resolution and the ATO has made no determination, e.g. for swagging, the CEO will determine a rate which in the CEO's opinion is consistent with ATO determinations for the other allowances.

RISK MANAGEMENT

This assessment considers the risks that would arise should an inadequate Members Travel and Accommodation policy exist. Where risks exist, the recommended actions should be followed, mitigation strategy developed, and included in the BRC risk register.

TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

ATO	Australian Tax Office
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
Official Business	Business conducted on behalf of, and approved by BRC, either to fulfil a legislative requirement or to achieve a benefit for BRC Councillor's attendance at external courses, conferences, seminars or workshops.
TD	Taxation Determination
TR	Taxation Ruling
Travel Allowance	A travel allowance is a sum of money paid to you, generally before you start travelling. It gives you funds to pay for your travel costs.
Work	Includes any activity

REFERENCES

Travel Allowance Claim Form
Travel Reimburse Claim Form
Authority to Travel Form

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

ATO TD 2017/19
ATO TR 2004/6
Any current *Enterprise Agreement* (EBA) to which Barkly Regional Council is a party

LINKS

<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/LOCAL-GOVERNMENT-ACT>
<https://www.ato.gov.au/law/view/document?DocID=TXD/TD201719/NAT/ATO/00001>

RESPONSIBILITY & DELEGATION

The Barkly Regional Council and the CEO or the CEO's delegate has delegated authority to make determinations in relation to eligibility for travel allowance and the determination of claims for travel allowance, subject to compliance with legislative requirements and this Policy.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy should be evaluated on the basis that the Audit Committee is satisfied that it has been and is being implemented.

This policy to be reviewed annually as the ATO Taxation Determinations and Taxation Rulings are reviewed each financial year.