

POLICY

TITLE:	Remote Attendance by Members at Meetings		
DIRECTORATE:	Council		
ADOPTED BY:	Council Resolution:		
DATE OF ADOPTION:	29 November 2024	DATE OF REVIEW:	29 November 2026
POLICY NUMBER:	109		
LEGISLATIVE REF:	<i>Local Government Act 2019; Sections 95 & 98 (The Act)</i>		

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

This Policy authorises a member's attendance at a meeting by an audio or audiovisual conferencing system and describes the duties and obligations of relevant to the situation where a member/s attends by audio or audiovisual means.

1.2. Scope

This Policy applies to elected members, committee members and Council employees with Barkly Regional Council (BRC).

1.3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, **meeting** includes any meeting of Council, Audit Committee, Council Committee, or Local Authority meeting.

Member means a member of Council, Audit Committee, Council Committee or Local Authority.

1.4. Responsibilities

All persons within scope of this Policy are required to adhere to this Policy.

Council is accountable for the overall management of this Policy.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for implementing and supporting this Policy.

1.5. Policy Objectives

- 1) Council is committed to facilitate access and participation in meetings by permitting members to be present and participate remotely via audio or audiovisual conferencing systems if specific needs arise and they are unable to be present in person.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Policy

- 1) It is Council's preference that members attend meetings in person. However, a member may attend a meeting via audio or audiovisual conferencing system, in accordance with the requirements of this Policy. MS Teams is Council's preferred platform.
- 2) Except in cases of emergency, members should provide at least one (1) days' notice to the CEO that they intend to attend a meeting via the audio or audiovisual conferencing system and the reason(s) for not being physically present at the meeting.
- 3) A member who is not physically present at a meeting is taken to be present at the meeting if the member's attendance at the meeting by means of an audio or audiovisual conferencing system is authorised in accordance with this Policy.

- 4) If the Chair of the meeting is attending via audio or audiovisual conferencing system, the Chair may choose to delegate the function of chairing the meeting to the deputy, or if there is no deputy, another member.

3. CEO RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) The CEO (or authorised delegate) must ensure the provision of the necessary equipment, and setup of that equipment, to provide an adequate conferencing system that enables remote attendance of members.
- 2) The CEO (or authorised delegate) must ensure that the audio or audiovisual conferencing system is switched on and tested for the meeting and the relevant members have the correct information to enable their attendance (e.g. phone number, video link or other login details to enable a member to attend remotely).

4. CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) The Chair is to confirm which participants are present at the commencement of the meeting.
- 2) To ensure the participation of any members attending remotely, the Chair will confirm that members attending remotely are able to hear the discussion and are able to vote.
- 3) The Chair of a meeting must ensure that any member attending a meeting remotely is offered the same or substantially the same opportunity to participate in debate, and to register an opinion, on questions arising for decision, as if the member were physically present at the meeting.
- 4) If technical issues arise that prevent a member from being heard or to hear during the meeting, the Chair can declare that the member has left the meeting. If the Chair experiences technical issues and has left the meeting, then Council or the Committee must by resolution appoint a member as the presiding member being the Deputy Mayor/Deputy Chair in the first instance or another member if the deputy is unable to preside.
- 5) Meeting minutes will identify whether each member attended in person or via audio or audiovisual means.
- 6) Where a remote member leaves or re-enters a meeting, these details must be recorded in the minutes with a reference to the member's time of departure and time of return.

5. REMOTE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) A member in attendance via audiovisual conferencing system is to consider the appropriateness of their personal presentation when attending a meeting remotely.
- 2) Attendance in a public place where conversation can be overheard by others is not considered appropriate.
- 3) It is the responsibility of the member attending remotely to immediately make it known if they are experiencing difficulties with the technology and hearing during the meeting.
- 4) A member who is attending by audio/audiovisual means must advise the Chair if they are about to leave the meeting. A member must also advise the Chair if they re-join the meeting.
- 5) Public WIFI's and hotspots are not considered safe for the transmission of information, and therefore should not be used.
- 6) Members attending meetings remotely are responsible for ensuring that:
 - a. people in their presence who are not members cannot see, overhear or listen to the member or the meeting (unless the Council is aware and accepts the circumstances); and
 - b. they do not record the meeting; and
 - c. they must ensure that confidential papers are not visible or accessible by any person who is not a member.

6. VOTING

- 1) If a member is attending via an audio conferencing system without video capability, the Chair is to ask for verbal confirmation of the member's vote.
- 2) If a member is attending via audiovisual conferencing system, the Chair is to ask for the member's vote by show of hands or verbal confirmation.

7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 1) It is the responsibility of individual members attending a meeting remotely to ensure they do not participate in an agenda item, or hear the discussion, if they have declared a conflict of interest in the matter.
- 2) Where a conflict is declared which affects the member in remote attendance, that member must fully disconnect from the conferencing system prior to the discussion of the particular agenda item.
- 3) If the member has disconnected from the conferencing system due to a declared conflict, the Chair will contact the member as soon as the agenda item has concluded and invite the member to re-join the meeting.

8. RELEVANT POLICIES

Policies and procedures to be read in conjunction with this policy are:

- 1) Council Meeting Protocols
- 2) Council Committee Terms of Reference Policy
- 3) Codes of Conduct
- 4) Conflict of Interest Policy
- 5) Confidential Information & Business Policy

9. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

9.1. Implementation

Relevant personnel will be made aware of this Policy. It is not a requirement of the Act for this Policy to be published on the Barkly Regional Council website.

9.2. Review

This policy will be reviewed on or before 29 November 2026.

10. VARIATIONS, REVOCATIONS AND/OR CHANGES

Barkly Regional Council reserves the right to revoke and/or amend this policy from time to time as is considered necessary to better manage its business and/or to comply with any legislative requirements.

11. APPROVAL

This policy is approved.

Chris Kelly
Chief Executive Officer


Signature

29 Nov 2024
Dated

END