



FAR NORTH WEST

JOINT ORGANISATION

Voting Representative Expenses and Facilities Policy

November 2025

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Meeting of Expenses Generally

It is has been agreed that travel associated with attendance at all meeting of the Far North West Joint Organisation will be met by each of the member Councils in respective of their representative and as such no payment will be required.

It has also been agreed that each member Council will make their facilities available for the conduct of meetings of Joint Organisation Meetings subject to no ancillary costs being incurred.

This Policy will only come into effect when voting delegates and /or the Chairperson incur expenses not met by their Council.

Given the training needs and attendance at conferences will generally be required for voting delegates in their role as Mayor it is not anticipated that the utilisation of this policy will be extensive.

Not withstanding the above this policy has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of sections 252 and 253 of the Local Government to enable the payment of expenses and provision of facilities to be undertaken when required.

Policy summary

This policy enables the reasonable and appropriate reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities to voting representatives to help them undertake their civic duties.

It ensures accountability and transparency, and seeks to align voting representatives' expenses and facilities with community expectations. Voting representatives must not obtain private or political benefit from any expense or facility provided under this policy.

The policy has been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* (the Regulation), and complies with the Office of Local Government's Guidelines for the payment of expenses and provision of facilities to Mayors and Councillors in NSW. In the case of Joint Organisations this refers to Chairpersons and Voting Representatives. The policy sets out the maximum amounts the board will pay for specific expenses and facilities. Expenses not explicitly addressed in this policy will not be paid or reimbursed.

The main expenses and facilities are summarised in the table below. All monetary amounts are exclusive of GST.

Expense or facility	Maximum amount	Frequency
General travel expenses	\$1000.00 per voting representative \$2000.00 for the chairperson	Per year
Interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses	Included in Above	Per year
Accommodation and meals	As per the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, adjusted annually	Per meal/night
Professional development	\$1000.00 per voting representative	Per year
Conferences and seminars	\$3000.00 total for all voting representatives	Per year
ICT expenses	\$500.00 per voting representative	Per year
Carer expenses	\$750.00 per voting representative	Per year
Home office expenses	\$250.00 per voting representative	Per year
Postage stamps		Not relevant
Christmas or festive cards		Not relevant
Access to facilities in a Voting Representative common room		Not relevant
Board vehicle and fuel card		Not relevant
Reserved parking space at Board offices		Not relevant
Furnished office		Not relevant
Number of exclusive staff supporting Chairperson and Voting Representatives		Not relevant

Additional costs incurred by a voting representative in excess of these limits are considered a personal expense that is the responsibility of the voting representative.

Voting representatives must provide claims for reimbursement within three (3) months of an expense being incurred. Claims made after this time cannot be approved.

Detailed reports on the provision of expenses and facilities to voting delegates will be publicly tabled at a board meeting every six months and published in full on the Board's website. These reports will include expenditure summarised by individual voting representative and as a total for all voting representatives.

Part A – Introduction

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The provision of expenses and facilities enables voting representatives to fulfil their civic duties as the elected delegates of the Far North West Joint Organisation.
- 1.2. The community is entitled to know the extent of expenses paid to voting representatives, as well as the facilities provided.
- 1.3. The purpose of this policy is to clearly state the facilities and support that are available to voting representatives to assist them in fulfilling their civic duties.
- 1.4. Joint Organisation staff are empowered to question or refuse a request for payment from a voting representative when it does not accord with this policy.
- 1.5. Not Applicable To Joint Organisations

2. Policy objectives

- 2.1. The objectives of this policy are to:
 - enable the reasonable and appropriate reimbursement of expenses incurred by voting representatives while undertaking their civic duties
 - enable facilities of a reasonable and appropriate standard to be provided to voting representatives to support them in undertaking their civic duties
 - ensure accountability and transparency in reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities to voting representatives
 - ensure facilities and expenses provided to voting representatives to meet community expectations
 - support a diversity of representation
 - fulfil the board's statutory responsibilities.

3. Principles

- 3.1. The Board commits to the following principles:
 - **Proper conduct:** voting representatives and staff acting lawfully and honestly, exercising care and diligence in carrying out their functions
 - **Reasonable expenses:** providing for voting representatives to be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred as part of their role as voting representative
 - **Participation and access:** enabling people from diverse backgrounds, underrepresented groups, those in carer roles and those with special needs to serve as a voting representative
 - **Equity:** there must be equitable access to expenses and facilities for all voting representatives
 - **Appropriate use of resources:** providing clear direction on the appropriate use of the Board's resources in accordance with legal requirements and community expectations
 - **Accountability and transparency:** clearly stating and reporting on the expenses and facilities provided to voting representatives.

4. Private or political benefit

- 4.1. Voting representatives must not obtain private or political benefit from any expense or facility provided under this policy.
- 4.2. Private use of board equipment and facilities by voting representatives may occur from time to time. For example, telephoning home to advise that a board meeting will run later than expected.
- 4.3. Such incidental private use does not require a compensatory payment back to the Board.
- 4.4. Voting representatives should avoid obtaining any greater private benefit from the Board than an incidental benefit. Where there are unavoidable circumstances and more substantial private use of board facilities does occur, voting representatives must reimburse the board.
- 4.5. Campaigns for re-election are considered to be a political benefit. The following are examples of what is considered to be a political interest during a re-election campaign:
 - production of election material
 - use of board resources and equipment for campaigning
 - use of official board letterhead, publications, websites or services for political benefit
 - fundraising activities of political parties or individuals, including political fundraising events.

Part B – Expenses

5. General expenses

- 5.1. All expenses provided under this policy will be for a purpose specific to the functions of holding civic office. Allowances for general expenses are not permitted under this policy.
- 5.2. Expenses not explicitly addressed in this policy will not be paid or reimbursed.

6. Specific expenses

General travel arrangements and expenses

- 6.1. All travel by voting representatives should be undertaken using the most direct route and the most practicable and economical mode of transport.
- 6.2. Each voting representative may be reimbursed up to a total of \$1000.00 per year, and the chairperson may be reimbursed up to a total of \$2000.00 per year, for travel expenses incurred while undertaking official business or professional development or attending approved conferences and seminars within NSW. This includes reimbursement:
 - for public transport fares
 - for the use of a private vehicle or hire car
 - for parking costs for board and other meetings
 - for tolls
 - by Cabcharge card or equivalent
 - for documented ride-share programs, such as Uber, where tax invoices can be issued.
- 6.3. Allowances for the use of a private vehicle will be reimbursed by kilometre at the rate contained in the Local Government (State) Award.
- 6.4. Voting representatives seeking to be reimbursed for use of a private vehicle must keep a log book recording the date, distance and purpose of travel being claimed. Copies of the relevant log book contents must be provided with the claim.

Interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses

- 6.5. Given the Board's location near an interstate border, travel to Queensland will be considered as general travel. Arrangements and expenses for this travel will be governed by Clauses 6.1-6.4].
- 6.6. In accordance with Section 4, the board will scrutinise the value and need for voting representatives to undertake overseas travel. Boards should avoid interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate trips unless direct and tangible benefits can be established for the board and the local community. This includes travel to sister and friendship cities.
- 6.7. Total interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses for all voting representatives will be capped at a maximum of \$3000.00 per year. This amount will be set aside in the Board's annual budget.
- 6.8. Voting representatives seeking approval for any interstate and long distance intrastate travel must submit a case to, and obtain the approval of, the executive officer prior to travel.
- 6.9. Voting representatives seeking approval for any overseas travel must submit a case to, and obtain the approval of, a full board meeting prior to travel.
- 6.10. The case should include:
 - objectives to be achieved in travel, including an explanation of how the travel aligns with current board priorities and business, the community benefits which will accrue as a result, and its relevance to the exercise of the voting representative's civic duties
 - who is to take part in the travel
 - duration and itinerary of travel
 - a detailed budget including a statement of any amounts expected to be reimbursed by the participant/s.
- 6.11. For interstate and long distance intrastate journeys by air of less than three hours, the class of air travel is to be economy class.
- 6.12. For interstate journeys by air of more than three hours, the class of air travel may be premium economy.
- 6.13. For international travel, the class of air travel is to be premium economy if available. Otherwise, the class of travel is to be economy.
- 6.14. Bookings for approved air travel are to be made through the executive officer's office.
- 6.15. For air travel that is reimbursed as board business, voting representatives will not accrue points from the airline's frequent flyer program. This is considered a private benefit.

Travel expenses not paid by the Board

- 6.16. The Board will not pay any traffic or parking fines or administrative charges for road toll accounts.

Accommodation and meals

- 6.17. In circumstances where it would introduce undue risk for a voting representative to travel to or from official business in the late evening or early morning, reimbursement of costs for accommodation and meals on the night before or after the meeting may be approved by the executive officer. This includes where a meeting finishes later than 9.00pm or starts earlier than 7.00am and the voting representative lives more than 50 kilometres from the meeting location.
- 6.18. The Board will reimburse costs for accommodation and meals while voting representatives are undertaking prior approved travel or professional development outside the FNWJO area.
- 6.19. The daily limits for accommodation and meal expenses within Australia are to be consistent with those set out in Part B Monetary Rates of the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, as adjusted annually.
- 6.20. The daily limits for accommodation and meal expenses outside Australia are to be determined in advance by the executive officer, being mindful of Clause 6.19.
- 6.21. Voting representatives will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages.

Refreshments for board-related meetings

- 6.22. Appropriate refreshments will be available for board meetings, board committee meetings, voting representatives' briefings, approved meetings and engagements, and official board functions as approved by the executive officer.
- 6.23. As an indicative guide for the standard of refreshments to be provided at board-related meetings, the executive officer must be mindful of Part B Monetary Rates of the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, as adjusted annually.

Professional development

- 6.24. The Board will set aside \$1000.00 per voting representative annually in its budget to facilitate professional development of voting representatives through programs, training, education courses and membership of professional bodies.
- 6.25. In the first year of a new board term, the Board will provide a comprehensive induction program for all voting representatives which considers any guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government (OLG). The cost of the induction program will be in addition to the ongoing professional development funding.
- 6.26. Annual membership of professional bodies will only be covered where the membership is relevant to the exercise of the voting representative's civic duties, the voting representative actively participates in the body and the cost of membership is likely to be fully offset by savings from attending events as a member.
- 6.27. Approval for professional development activities is subject to a prior written request to the executive officer outlining the:
 - details of the proposed professional development
 - relevance to board priorities and business
 - relevance to the exercise of the voting representative's civic duties.
- 6.28. In assessing a voting representative request for a professional development activity, the executive officer must consider the factors set out in Clause 6.27, as well as the cost of the professional development in relation to the voting representative's remaining budget.

Conferences and seminars

- 6.29. The Board is committed to ensuring its voting representatives are up to date with contemporary issues facing the board and the community, and local government in NSW.
- 6.30. The Board will set aside a total amount of \$3000.00 annually in its budget to facilitate voting representatives' attendance at conferences and seminars. This allocation is for all voting representatives. The executive officer will ensure that access to expenses relating to conferences and seminars is distributed equitably.
- 6.31. Approval to attend a conference or seminar is subject to a written request to the executive officer. In assessing a voting representative's request, the executive officer must consider factors including the:
 - relevance of the topics and presenters to current board priorities and business and the exercise of the voting representative's civic duties
 - cost of the conference or seminar in relation to the total remaining budget.
- 6.32. The Board will meet the reasonable cost of registration fees, transportation and accommodation associated with attendance at conferences approved by the executive officer. The Board will also meet the reasonable cost of meals when they are not included in the conference fees. Reimbursement for accommodation and meals not included in the conference fees will be subject to Clauses 6.18-6.21.

Information and communications technology (ICT) expenses

- 6.33. The Board will provide or reimburse voting representatives for expenses associated with appropriate ICT devices and services up to a limit of \$500.00 per annum for each voting

representative. This may include mobile phones and tablets, mobile phone and tablet services and data, and home internet costs.

- 6.34. Reimbursements will be made only for communications devices and services used for voting representatives to undertake their civic duties, such as:
 - receiving and reading board business papers
 - relevant phone calls and correspondence
 - diary and appointment management.
- 6.35. Voting representatives may seek reimbursement for applications on their mobile electronic communication device that are directly related to their duties as a voting representative, within the maximum limit.

Special requirement and carer expenses

- 6.36. The Board encourages wide participation and interest in civic office. It will seek to ensure board premises and associated facilities are accessible, including provision for sight or hearing impaired voting representatives and those with other disabilities.
- 6.37. Transportation provisions outlined in this policy will also assist voting representatives who may be unable to drive a vehicle.
- 6.38. In addition to the provisions above, the executive officer may authorise the provision of reasonable additional facilities and expenses in order to allow a voting representative with a disability to perform their civic duties.
- 6.39. Voting representatives who are the principal carer of a child or other elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family member will be entitled to reimbursement of carer's expenses up to a maximum of \$750.00 per annum for attendance at official business, plus reasonable travel from the principal place of residence.
- 6.40. Child care expenses may be claimed for children up to and including the age of 16 years where the carer is not a relative.
- 6.41. In the event of caring for an adult person, voting representatives will need to provide suitable evidence to the executive officer that reimbursement is applicable. This may take the form of advice from a medical practitioner.

Home office expenses

- 6.42. Each voting representative may be reimbursed up to \$250.00 per year for costs associated with the maintenance of a home office, such as minor items of consumable stationery and printer ink cartridges.

7. Insurances

- 7.1. In accordance with Section 382 of the Local Government Act, the board is insured against public liability and professional indemnity claims. Voting representatives are covered by the insurances held by their Council..
- 7.2. Insurance protection is only provided if a claim arises out of or in connection with the voting representative's performance of his or her civic duties, or exercise of his or her functions as a voting representative. All insurances are subject to any limitations or conditions set out in the policies of insurance.
- 7.3. The Board shall pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim accepted by the board's insurers, whether defended or not.
- 7.4. Appropriate travel insurances will be provided for any voting representatives travelling on approved interstate and overseas travel on board business.

8. Legal assistance

- 8.1. The Board may, if requested, indemnify or reimburse the reasonable legal expenses of:
 - a voting representative defending an action arising from the performance in good faith of a function under the Local Government Act provided that the outcome of the legal proceedings is favourable to the voting representative
 - a voting representative defending an action in defamation, provided the statements complained of were made in good faith in the course of exercising a function under the Act and the outcome of the legal proceedings is favourable to the voting representative
 - a voting representative for proceedings before an appropriate investigative or review body, provided the subject of the proceedings arises from the performance in good faith of a function under the Act and the matter has proceeded past any initial assessment phase to a formal investigation or review and the investigative or review body makes a finding substantially favourable to the voting representative.
- 8.2. In the case of a code of conduct complaint made against a voting representative, legal costs will only be made available where the matter has been referred by the executive officer to a conduct reviewer and the conduct reviewer has commenced a formal investigation of the matter and makes a finding substantially favourable to the voting representative.
- 8.3. Legal expenses incurred in relation to proceedings arising out of the performance by a voting representative of his or her functions under the Act are distinguished from expenses incurred in relation to proceedings arising merely from something that a voting representative has done during his or her term in office. For example, expenses arising from an investigation as to whether a voting representative acted corruptly would not be covered by this section.
- 8.4. The Board will not meet the legal costs:
 - of legal proceedings initiated by a voting representative under any circumstances
 - of a voting representative seeking advice in respect of possible defamation, or in seeking a non-litigious remedy for possible defamation
 - for legal proceedings that do not involve a voting representative performing their role as a voting representative.
- 8.5. Reimbursement of expenses for reasonable legal expenses must have Board approval by way of a resolution at a board meeting prior to costs being incurred.

Part C – Facilities

9. General facilities for all voting representatives

Facilities

- 9.1. The Board will provide the following facilities to voting representatives to assist them to effectively discharge their civic duties:
 - access to shared car parking spaces while attending board offices on official business
 - personal protective equipment for use during site visits
 - a name badge which may be worn at official functions, indicating that the wearer holds the office of a voting representative and/or chairperson or deputy chairperson.
- 9.2. Voting representatives may book meeting rooms for official business in a specified board building at no cost. Rooms may be booked through the executive officer or the General Manager of the Council which owns the room..
- 9.3. The provision of facilities will be of a standard deemed by the executive officer as appropriate for the purpose.

Stationery

- 9.4. The Board will provide the following stationery to voting representatives each year, if requested:
 - letterhead, to be used only for correspondence associated with civic duties
 - business cards
- 9.5. This Section is not Applicable to Joint Organisations.

Administrative support

- 9.6. The Board will provide administrative support to voting representatives to assist them with their civic duties only. Administrative support may be provided the executive officer or their delegate.
- 9.7. As per Section 4, staff are expected to assist voting representatives with civic duties only, and not assist with matters of personal or political interest, including campaigning.

10. Additional facilities for the Chairperson

This section is not applicable to the Far North West Joint Organisation.

Part D – Processes

11. Approval, payment and reimbursement arrangements

- 11.1. Expenses should only be incurred by voting representatives in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
- 11.2. Approval for incurring expenses, or for the reimbursement of such expenses, should be obtained before the expense is incurred.
- 11.3. Up to the maximum limits specified in this policy, approval for the following may be sought after the expense is incurred:
 - local travel relating to the conduct of official business
 - carer costs
 - ICT expenditure.
- 11.4. Final approval for payments made under this policy will be granted by the executive officer or their delegate.

Direct payment

- 11.5. The Board may approve and directly pay expenses. Requests for direct payment must be submitted to the Executive Officer for assessment against this policy using the prescribed form, with sufficient information and time to allow for the claim to be assessed and processed.

Reimbursement

- 11.6. All claims for reimbursement of expenses incurred must be made on the prescribed form, supported by appropriate receipts and/or tax invoices and be submitted to the Executive Officer.

Advance payment

- 11.7. The Board may pay a cash advance for voting representatives attending approved conferences, seminars or professional development.
- 11.8. The maximum value of a cash advance is \$100.00 per day of the conference, seminar or professional development to a maximum of \$300.00.

- 11.9. Requests for advance payment must be submitted to the Executive Officer for assessment against this policy using the prescribed form with sufficient information and time to allow for the claim to be assessed and processed.
- 11.10. Voting representatives must fully reconcile all expenses against the cost of the advance within one month of incurring the cost and/or returning home. This includes providing to the board:
 - a full reconciliation of all expenses including appropriate receipts and/or tax invoices
 - reimbursement of any amount of the advance payment not spent in attending to official business or professional development.

Notification

- 11.11. If a claim is approved, the board will make payment directly or reimburse the voting representative through accounts payable.
- 11.12. If a claim is refused, the board will inform the voting representative in writing that the claim has been refused and the reason for the refusal.

Reimbursement to the board

- 11.13. If the board has incurred an expense on behalf of a voting representative that exceeds a maximum limit, exceeds reasonable incidental private use or is not provided for in this policy:
 - The board will invoice the voting representative for the expense
 - the voting representative will reimburse the board for that expense within 14 days of the invoice date.
- 11.14. If the voting representative cannot reimburse the board within 14 days of the invoice date, they are to submit a written explanation to the executive officer. The executive officer may elect to deduct the amount from the voting representative's allowance.

Timeframe for reimbursement

- 11.15. Unless otherwise specified in this policy, voting representatives must provide all claims for reimbursement within three months of an expense being incurred. Claims made after this time cannot be approved.

12. Disputes

- 12.1. If a voting representative disputes a determination under this policy, the voting representative should discuss the matter with the executive officer.
- 12.2. If the voting representative and the executive officer cannot resolve the dispute, the voting representative may submit a notice of motion to a board meeting seeking to have the dispute resolved.

13. Return or retention of facilities

- 13.1. All unexpended facilities or equipment supplied under this policy are to be relinquished immediately upon a voting representative or chairperson ceasing to hold office or at the cessation of their civic duties.
- 13.2. Should a voting representative desire to keep any equipment allocated by the board, then this policy enables the voting representative to make application to the executive officer to purchase any such equipment. The executive officer will determine an agreed fair market price or written down value for the item of equipment.
- 13.3. The prices for all equipment purchased by voting representatives under Clause 13.2 will be recorded in the Board's annual report.

14. Publication

14.1. This policy will be published on the board's website.

15. Reporting

- 15.1. The Board will report on the provision of expenses and facilities to voting representatives as required in the Act and Regulations.
- 15.2. Detailed reports on the provision of expenses and facilities to voting representatives will be publicly tabled at a board meeting every six months and published in full on the board's website. These reports will include expenditure summarised by an individual voting representative and as a total for all voting representatives.

16. Auditing

- 16.1. The operation of this policy, including claims made under the policy, will be included in the board's audit program and an audit undertaken at least every two years.

17. Breaches

- 17.1. Suspected breaches of this policy are to be reported to the executive officer.
- 17.2. Alleged breaches of this policy shall be dealt with by following the processes outlined for breaches of the Code of Conduct, as detailed in the Code and in the Procedures for the Administration of the Code.

PART E – Appendices

Appendix I: Related legislation, guidance and policies

Relevant legislation and guidance:

- Local Government Act 1993, Sections 252 and 253
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, Clauses 217 and 403
- Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for Chairpersons and Voting Representatives in NSW, 2009
- Local Government Circular 09-36 Guidelines for Payment of Expenses and Facilities
- Local Government Circular 05-08 legal assistance for Voting Representatives and Board Employees.

Related Board policies:

- Code of Conduct

Appendix II: Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this policy.

Term	Definition
accompanying person	Means a spouse, partner or de facto or other person who has a close personal relationship with or provides carer support to a voting representative
appropriate refreshments	Means food and beverages, excluding alcohol, provided by the board to support voting representatives undertaking official business
Act	Means the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW)
clause	Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a clause is a reference to a clause of this policy
Code of Conduct	Means the Code of Conduct adopted by the Board or the Model Code if none is adopted
Voting Representative	Means a person elected or appointed to civic office as a member of the governing body of the board who is not suspended, including the chairperson
Executive Officer	Means the executive officer of the Board and includes their delegate or authorised representative
incidental personal use	Means use that is infrequent and brief and use that does not breach this policy or the Code of Conduct
long distance intrastate travel	Means travel to other parts of NSW of more than three hours duration by private vehicle
maximum limit	Means the maximum limit for an expense or facility provided in the text and summarised in Appendix 1
NSW	New South Wales
official business	<p>Means functions that the chairperson or voting representatives are required or invited to attend to fulfil their legislated role and responsibilities for the board or result in a direct benefit for the board and/or for the local government area, and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings of the board and committees of the whole • meetings of committees facilitated by the board • civic receptions hosted or sponsored by the board • meetings, functions, workshops and other events to which attendance by a voting representative has been requested or approved by the board
professional development	Means a seminar, conference, training course or other development opportunity relevant to the role of a voting representative or the chairperson
Regulation	Means the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (NSW)
Year	Means the financial year, that is the 12 month period commencing on 1 July each year