

# Council Policy

**TITLE: Councillor Attendance policy**



<b>Policy Number</b>	DCS023
<b>Category</b>	Governance
<b>Strategic Plan Reference</b>	Goal 4
<b>Approval date</b>	28/08/15
<b>Minutes Reference</b>	Council meeting 28/08/15
<b>Last Reviewed</b>	23/05/14
<b>Next Review Date</b>	01/07/17

## 1. Purpose

This policy informs Councillors of their meeting responsibilities as part of the MacDonnell Regional Council, including:

- Attendance at Ordinary Council, Special Council and Local Authority meetings
- Apologies at Ordinary Council, Special Council and Local Authority meetings

## 2. Scope

This policy covers all members elected to the Council.

It replaces the Councillor Meeting Attendance Responsibilities policy.

## 3. Policy Objectives

- 3.1 To encourage elected members to attend as many meetings as possible
- 3.2 To outline elected members' responsibilities in meeting attendance
- 3.3 To achieve a fair balance between a person's commitments as an elected member, their employment commitments, and family and community obligations.
- 3.4 To provide an internal appeal process for elected members to request Council's consideration of any special circumstances have affected attendance.

## 4. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the principles upon which decisions regarding attendance at council meetings can be made and establishes procedures for seeking permission for a known leave of absence.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the MacDonnell Regional Council Code of Conduct.

### 4.1 Councillor meeting attendance responsibilities

All Councillors are required to attend Ordinary Council meetings and Special Council meetings. If a Councillor cannot attend these meetings they will need to submit an apology (see section 4.3. apologies below).

Councillors are able to attend by phoning in to meetings or participating via videoconferencing.

Councillors who are members of a Committee of Council are required to attend those meetings or submit an apology.

Councillors are encouraged to attend Local Authority meetings in their ward, consistent with the relevant Guideline under the Local Government Act.

#### 4.2 Leave of Absence

Good practice for notifying council of a known leave of absence requires:

- elected members to provide notice one month in advance in order to allow for council's approval before the intended leave of absence,
- the CEO to ensure that the written request is included in the next available agenda to be tabled for discussion, and
- decision by way of a resolution to either accept or reject the leave of absence and to provide details on the reasoning behind the decision if the leave of absence is rejected.

#### 4.3 Apologies

Apologies must be given 3 days in advance of a Council, Special Council or other meeting. If a Councillor will be unable to attend a meeting they need to advise the delegated Council staff member as well as the Council President and provide a reason for their lack of attendance. They may also provide a written apology. Councillors should not wait to be contacted by that Council staff member.

This apology needs to be accepted by Council to be valid.

Councillors are advised to provide supporting documentation to the delegated Council staff member to increase the chances of their apology being accepted.

Documentation may be provided after the meeting if it is part of an appeal process.

If an apology is not accepted it will be recorded as an absence (see section 4.4. absences).

#### 4.4 Absence

The Local Government Act 2013 states that Councillors who are absent for two consecutive Ordinary Council meetings are automatically no longer members.

Absence from a Special Council meeting will be treated as an absence from an Ordinary Council meeting unless Councillors had less than one week's notice of the meeting.

#### 4.5 Appeals (procedural fairness)

An elected member who wishes to appeal a decision of council in relation to attendance should be afforded the opportunity to address the council.

Applications for appeal should:

- be made in writing and should provide details of any special circumstances (including any support letters) that should be taken into account;
- be submitted to the delegated council staff member; and
- be submitted one week in advance of the council meeting, to ensure that it is tabled in the agenda for discussion.

The elected member may wish to request that the agenda item be placed in the confidential business section if the surrounding circumstances are of a sensitive nature, in accordance with section 8(e) of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations.

If the appeal is successful the previous resolution of non-acceptance should be rescinded and any related records are changed to that effect.

#### 5. Legislation and References

<b>Related Legislation</b>	Local Government Act 2013
<b>Related Policies</b>	Local Authority Policy, Elected Members' Allowances
<b>Related Procedures</b>	
<b>Associated Documents</b>	

#### 5. Delegation and Implementation

<b>Delegate</b>	CEO
<b>Implementation Officer</b>	Corporate Governance Officer

#### 6. Administration

<b>InfoXpert file number</b>	116453
<b>On Internet (Council Policy)</b>	27/05/14
<b>On Intranet (Operational Policy)</b>	