EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

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EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

1. Purpose of Policy

1.1 Brewarrina Shire Council ("Council") recognises that appropriate continual learning can be valuable for the development and welfare of its employees. Appropriate education can contribute to the quality and competence of employees and in turn increase further the productivity and success of Council.

1.2 The objective of this Policy is to outline the assistance Council may provide to employees who wish to undertake relevant continuing education with the Council's approval. This Policy covers both the financial assistance and assistance with working arrangements, which may be provided by Council, to assist employees balance the demands of work and further studies.

1.3 Nothing in this Policy affects the application of Council scholarship programs or policies, training and development provisions of the the Local Government (State) Award 2010.

2. Application of the Policy

2.1 This Policy applies to employees who wish to undertake further education who meet the eligibility requirements listed below. This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment.

3. Commencement of Policy

3.1 This Policy will commence from XXXXXX. It replaces all other Education Assistance Policies of Council (whether written or not). This Policy may at Council's absolute discretion, apply to employees who have already commenced a relevant course of study prior to 10 July 2012.

4. Definitions

4.1 Education: includes, but is not limited to, further part-time and distance learning education courses leading to the award of a recognised academic or vocational qualification, from a recognised educational institution.

5. Provision of Assistance

5.1 Council may, at its absolute discretion, provide assistance to employees to complete education (having regard to resource limitations) where:

- the proposed education is relevant to Council's requirements;
- the proposed education is relevant to the employee's career development with Council;
- the ability of Council's budget to fund the education program;
- the employee has consistently demonstrated a satisfactory or above average job performance;
- Assistance will not be provided for repeat subjects; and

- Textbooks provided by Council are to remain a resource of Council; and will not become the property of the student. The textbooks are to be held in Council's library for further reference.

- Any intellectual property produced while undertaking an Educational Program remains the property of Council.

6. Application Process and Terms of Assistance

6.1 Employees must make a written application for educational assistance prior to enrolment in the relevant educational course.

6.2 Written applications should include where possible the following details:

- course name;

- type of qualification being pursued;

- the name of the educational institution in which the course will be undertaken;

- the duration of the course, indicating whether it will be completed on a part-time, full-time or by distance learning basis;

- a list of the course subjects and a summary of the contents of each course;

- where the employee has already completed some components of the course, a list of the subjects already completed and evidence of the grading received for each completed subject;

- an itemised list of the costs involved in completing the course (eg course fees and other expenses expected to be incurred such as textbooks, travel time etc) and evidence to confirm these costs;

- an explanation of how the course of study directly relates to the employee's current/prospective job description and responsibilities and how it will contribute to the employee's career development; and

- an explanation of how the course of study is relevant to the business objectives of the Council.

7. Approval Process & Terms of Assistance

7.1 Once an application has been received, the General Manager will advise in writing, whether Council will provide educational assistance, in what form this assistance will be provided, and over what period of time. For example, Council may choose to provide assistance on a term by term basis.

7.2 Any assistance provided is at the absolute discretion of Council and may be withdrawn at the end of the specified approved period without additional assistance being provided.

7.3 The employee will be required to incur all education costs upfront and Council will reimburse those approved expenses provided the employee has satisfied all other requirements. The provision of on-going assistance is also conditional upon the following:

- the employee passing the relevant units/subject for which assistance has been approved and provides evidence to the Council's satisfaction of this;
- the employee has, during the course of study, consistently maintained a satisfactory or above standard in their work performance;
- the employee is still employed by Council, at the completion of the relevant course units/subject for which assistance has been approved; and
- the employee agrees to repay the financial assistance provided in the circumstances listed below.

7.4 Retrospective assistance will not be granted to an employee. This means that applications for financial assistance made after the completion of a course will not be accepted. An employee must make an application in writing, notifying Council prior to enrolment in the course.

7.5 Approval for educational assistance is valid for the minimum duration to complete the course. Employees will need to re-apply at the end of the approval period, prior to re-enrolment.

8. Repayment of Educational Assistance Costs

8.1 In the case of all educational assistance, in the event of an employee failing a subject/s, the employee will be responsible for meeting all expenses associated with repeating that subject, or a replacement subject.

8.2 If Council, in its absolute discretion, decides to pay further education costs on behalf of an employee in advance, if the employee commences but later withdraws from further education, the Employee agrees to immediately repay Council that part of the Education costs which have been paid by Council as at the date of the employee's withdrawal from further education.

9. Types of assistance available

9.1 Council aims to make continuing education more expedient and/or less costly for its employees. The following forms of assistance may be provided at Council's absolute discretion.

9.2 <u>Study Leave</u>

A maximum of one study day of leave per calendar month of study may be available for:

- compulsory engagement in education activities (residential schools, lectures, online lectures/forums etc)
- Attending examinations

- Assignment preparation
- Study

(This study leave entitlement is based on a full part-time load being undertaken. Your supervisor should discuss with Human Resources Officer what your entitlement would be if your study load is more or less.)

A minimum of half a day of study leave can be taken at a time. The intent of study leave is to provide intermittent time off for exams, residential schools as they arise. It is not intended to take study leave in blocks, other than for compulsory residential school attendance.

An anticipated study leave schedule should be negotiated between the employee and their direct supervisor within one month of commencing the education program. Consideration should be given to operational needs and study load.

Note: A leave application must be submitted in advance for all study leave taken.

9.3 Costs associated with compulsory attendance at Residential Schools

9.3.1 Expenses

a. Expenses shall be actual expenses and wherever possible, supported by documentation. Staff are expected to be mindful of the expenditure of public funds and apply a degree of reasonableness to expenditure.

b. Expenses for each component shall not exceed, without detailed justification to the General Manager, guidelines provided below:

The standard rates, excluding travelling, as set out hereunder are to apply:

Accommodation	SYDNEY	CAPITAL CITIES	COUNTRY AREAS
	$200.00	$170.00	$130.00

9.3.2 Accommodation

The Council will pay reasonable accommodation costs including the night before and/or after to the compulsory Residential School where this is necessary because of travel and/or training timetables.

9.3.3 Travel

The Council will meet all reasonable travel costs to and from the compulsory Residential School location / venue.

- Where appropriate, travel will be provided by Council Vehicle and air if required (economy class).

- Where trains and bus are used the Council will provide first class travel, including sleeping berths where available.

- If a Council vehicle is unavailable a private vehicle may be utilised subject to prior approval of the General Manager.

- Where the staff member uses their private vehicle, they may claim the "kilometre" allowance as set by the Local Government (State) Award to a regional airport. The reimbursement paid from the regional airport to the destination will be the equivalent of the economy class airfare from the regional airport to the destination at the most economical rate.

  I.e.; Brewarrina to Sydney trip (own vehicle) reimbursement.
  -Brewarrina to Dubbo – kilometre rate allowance
  -Dubbo to Sydney- equivalent cost of airfare reimbursement

- Where hire cars, taxi fares and parking costs are reasonably required and incurred in attending training, the cost of such will be reimbursed by the Council upon presentation of a claim and receipt.

9.3.4 Out of Pocket Expenses incurred associated with attendance at the compulsory Residential School shall be reimbursed upon presentation of a claim and receipts for the following:

- Any hotel/motel related charges associated with the Education Program, other than accommodation.

- In individual circumstances payment in advance may be approved by the General Manager.

- All telephone, internet or facsimile calls related to Council business.

- Lunches, dinners and other meals incurred whilst travelling to or from the training will be reimbursed as per **appendix A.**

- Incidental expenses, e.g. bridge tolls.

- Any optional activity in the compulsory Residential School, but excluding any pre or post training activities.

9.3.5 No staff member shall not be entitled to claim Frequent Flyer and Loyalty Points relating to air travel or other expenses incurred by them under this policy. In circumstances where there is no option but to incur any expenditure for which loyalty points accrue to his/her personal account, the staff member must surrender the points to the airline or service provider before reimbursement of the expense by the Council.

9.3.6 Education Program Costs - Payment In Advance

The Council will normally pay accommodation costs and airline/train tickets direct to training organisers/travel agents in advance. Where this is not appropriate or possible a cash allowance or cheque equivalent thereto may be paid in advance to the attendee for payment to the appropriate party.

Any advance payments must be properly accounted for with receipts, on the prescribed voucher form within one (1) month after training.

9.3.7 Accompanying Person

Where the staff member is accompanied by non-council personnel all costs for, or incurred by, the accompanying person, including travel, any additional accommodation costs, breakfast, meals, registration and/or participation in any programs, are to be borne by the staff member/accompanying person and not by the Council.

Accompanying person's registrations, or accompanying person's program fees, are to be paid to the training organiser, etc. and paid at time of registration. The Council is prepared to receive such registration and payments and to forward them on to the conference organiser, etc. with any Council registration.

Where the Council meets, on account, any expenditure or cost on behalf of an accompanying person attending training, such expenditure must be repaid to the Council by the staff member/accompanying person within fourteen (14) days of being invoiced for such expenditure following the conclusion of the training.

10. Continuity of Study

10.1 The continuation of educational support is not guaranteed. The progress of Educational Assistance recipients will be reviewed as part of the performance management process and Council may withdraw this support on the grounds of: unsatisfactory subject/ course results the educational requirements and conditions of the University or College not being met; repeated subject failures in the course; availability of funding; unsatisfactory work performance; disciplinary action.

11. Variations

11.1 The Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

APPENDIX 'A'

Staff travelling on approved council related business may be entitled to be reimbursed for costs associated with the provision of meals for the staff member.

Breakfast: (see scale below)
Reimbursement for breakfast can be claimed if the staff member is required to be travelling away from home before 7am in the morning.

No benefit will paid when breakfast is provided as part of the accommodation expense paid by the council.

Lunch: (see scale below)
Reimbursement for lunch can be claimed if a midday meal is not provided by the 'host' organisation.

Dinner: (see scale below)
Reimbursement for dinner can be claimed if the staff member has not returned home by 7pm.

REIMBURSEMENT SCALE:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Maximum Daily Limit
$15-00	$20-00	$35-00	$70-00

To enable payment to be made to an employee the following will be required:

- All receipts for meals
- Completed Travel Claim Form, signed by employee and immediate supervisor.
- Claims to be submitted within three (3) months of travel

The following are exclusions which **will not** be considered for payment by council:

- Alcohol, cigarettes, items of an incidental or personal nature.
- Mini Bar expenses
- Telephone charges
- Laundry /Dry cleaning charges

NO REIMBURSEMENTS WILL BE MADE WITHOUT RECEIPTS.