

Community Bus Policy

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Responsible Officer:	Director Corporate Services

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to regulate the use of the Murweh Shire Council (the Council) Community Bus - so as to enhance the educational, recreational, healthcare, cultural, social and sporting opportunities of the Murweh Shire community.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

“vehicle” means any multiple passenger conveyance vehicle, including buses which are owned by the Murweh Shire Council and designated solely for community purposes.

“hirer” means an authorised representative of the organisation or community body on whose behalf, and with whose authority, the vehicle has been hired.

“driver” means the individual person nominated by the hirer who has been delegated the responsibility for driving the vehicle.

“origin point” means the town at which the hirer is based - being at Charleville Council Depot on the Mitchell Highway.

3. Parties Who May Hire Vehicles

Vehicles may only be hired on behalf of, and with the approval of, an organisation or community body based in the Murweh Shire. Individuals and businesses are not permitted to hire the vehicles unless expressly authorised by Council.

Organised groups and community bodies include, but are not limited to the following:

- Schools
- Healthcare clinics
- Aged citizens activities
- Community based committees and associations
- Sporting teams and clubs
- Craft and cultural groups
- Social clubs
- Development and progress associations
- Playgroups
- Charitable organisations

Community Bus Policy

Note

- Vehicles will not be hired to any party residing or registered outside the Murweh Shire unless by Council approval on a case-by-case basis.

4. Purposes For Which Vehicles May Be Hired

The vehicles may be hired for any purpose which has a direct benefit to the community. Purposes which are deemed to have a direct benefit to the community are those which enhance the educational, recreational, healthcare, aged care, cultural, social or sporting opportunities of people residing in the Murweh Shire.

Approved purposes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Excursions and tours
- Attendance at sporting functions
- Visits to healthcare providers
- Attendance at cultural events
- Group recreational activities
- Attendance at community meetings or activities.

For example: A School Parents and Friends Association may hire the bus to take residents on a sporting, cultural or historical workshop / experience trip to another community or location, but an individual may not.

A Craft Group may hire the bus to take residents to an exhibition in another community, and if there are spare seats available, may offer those seats to anyone else wishing to travel to that community for any purpose.

A Sporting Club may book the bus to take participants to and from a social event.

The Council may organise an excursion to various sites within the shire.

A progress association may hire the bus to take residents to a health clinic in another community and may also organise a cultural, sporting or social event to coincide with the travel.

5. Limitations of Travel

The Murweh Shire Council Community Bus may be hired for use anywhere in the following shires without special travel approval:

• Barcoo SC	• Balonne
• Barcaldine RC	• Bulloo
• Blackall/Tambo RC	• Maranoa RC
• Longreach RC	• Murweh SC
• Winton SC	• Paroo SC
• Boulia SC	• Quilpie SC
• Western Downs RC	• Toowoomba RC

Note

- Travel outside these areas requires the consent of Council.

6. Annual Driver Nominations

Hirers that intend to use the vehicles throughout the year are invited to submit to the Council an Annual Driver Nomination form, including a copy of a current drivers licence for all nominated drivers.

7. Bookings

All bookings are to be made with the Murweh Council Office in Charleville. Co-ordinating the use of the vehicles is the sole responsibility of the Murweh Shire Council and its staff.

Bookings may be held verbally; however, they are not confirmed until both a *Hire Application Form* and a *Nomination of Licensed Driver Form/s* has been received.

7.1. Hire Applications Forms

Where practicable, *Hire Application Forms* should be lodged with the Murweh Shire Council Office at least two (2) weeks prior to the nominated date of departure.

If special travel approval is required from Council, intending hirers must make written application in sufficient time (usually at least six (6) weeks) to allow the Council to make an informed decision before the intended hire period commences.

7.2. Nomination of Licensed Driver Form

If not already submitted to the Council Office, the Nomination of Licensed Driver Form must also be submitted at the time of booking for each driver.

7.3. Conflicting Bookings

In all cases, if two or more requests are received to book a vehicle on the same date, Council will allocate the vehicle to that party which lodged the earliest request with Council, irrespective of the intended purpose of the hire.

7.4. Council Discretion

Council reserves the right to refuse any booking. Council reserves the right to aggregate bookings for travel to the same destination on the same date, if it considers that it is reasonable to do so.

7.5 Security deposit

All users are required to pay a security deposit - which will be refunded on the return of the vehicle undamaged, clean and full of fuel.

8. Pickup and Delivery

The pickup and delivery of vehicles is the responsibility of the hirer from the Murweh Shire Council Depot located on the Mitchell Highway Charleville.

9. Acquittal

9.1. Origin Point Inspection

The hirer must notify the Council in advance of the time and date they expect to return the vehicle to the origin point, so that an inspection can be arranged by a Council staff member in respect of mileage, cleanliness and fuel.

9.2. Hire Acquittal Form

A Hire Acquittal Form, which has been signed off by the Council employee carrying out the inspection must be returned to the Council Office within seven (7) days of the conclusion of the hire.

9.3. Vehicle Logbook

The Vehicle Logbook located in the vehicle must also be completed and kept up to date during travel.

10. Driver Obligations

10.1. Medical Fitness

The driver/s:

- 10.1.1.** Must be medically fit to drive at all times and must not drive if they knowingly suffer from any medical condition which may affect their driving;
- 10.1.2.** Must have a blood alcohol concentration of zero;
- 10.1.3.** Must not be under the influence of a drug that might affect driving ability;
- 10.1.4.** Must not drive while they feel fatigued (refer to Queensland Transport Fatigue Management Regulations); and
- 10.1.5.** Must not smoke in the vehicle at any time or permit passengers to smoke while on the Community Bus.

10.2. Vehicle Operation and Maintenance

The driver/s:

- 10.2.1.** should take time to familiarise themselves with operating the vehicle and ensure that all relevant documentation has been read and understood prior to the commencement of the journey;
- 10.2.2.** must carry their drivers' licence at all times;
- 10.2.3.** must notify Council of any defects of the vehicle or any potential risks to passengers that they identify in accordance with section 36(d) of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011*;
- 10.2.4.** must ensure the appropriate fuel is used and the fuel is maintained above the ¼ full mark at all times. (If the vehicle runs out of fuel, the injectors will require bleeding);

Community Bus Policy

- 10.2.5.** must ensure that the vehicle is not driven through flood water (the air filter is very low on some vehicles); and
- 10.2.6.** must ensure that the oil, battery, radiator condition and tyre pressure is adequate both before and during the trip.

10.3. Passenger Management

The driver/s:

- 10.3.1.** should instruct passengers on expected behaviour and notify them of safety and emergency procedures prior to the commencement of the journey;
- 10.3.2.** may refuse to carry an animal except when the animal is required to assist a person with a disability; and
- 10.3.3.** may refuse travel to a person if the driver believes on reasonable grounds, that the person is causing, or likely to cause danger to themselves or others or a nuisance to the driver or other passengers.

11. Safety Requirements

Compliance with safety requirements and the safe conduct of passengers is the responsibility of the hirer.

11.1. Passenger Seating

Buses must not carry more than one (1) seated passenger per adult seat.

11.2. Emergency Hammers

The windows of the vehicles have been strengthened to add extra safety and strength to the roof in case of roll over. As a result, buses are fitted with small hammers to break glass in such an event. The importance of and use of these small hammers should be noted and their security checked at the end of each leg of the journey.

11.3. Luggage

Luggage should be stowed in a manner which reduces the risks of it becoming a projectile during a collision (eg. under seats, tied down, in an enclosed area).

12. Damage To Vehicles

The hirer is required to report all information associated with breakdowns and accidents to the Council Office as soon as practicable. Prior to any repairs being commenced, the repairer must contact the Council for authority to commence the work.

In the event of an accident involving a Council vehicle, notify the local police and then notify the Council as soon as practicable.

The user group is responsible for excess insurance currently \$500, and the cost of repairs to vehicles caused by wilful damage (eg: tearing of seats, removal of hammers etc..).

13. Charges And Obligations

All calculations of all hire charges and acquittal of cleanliness and fuel obligations takes place from the Murweh Shire Council Depot on the Mitchell Highway.

For example:

The charges and obligations only commence from the time the vehicle embarks on its journey from the Murweh Shire Council Depot unless otherwise agreed. The acquittal of charges and the hirer's obligations in respect of cleanliness and fuel takes place upon the return of the vehicle to the Murweh Shire Council Depot.

Unless an alternate financial agreement exists with the Council, the following charges and obligations apply:

- *Security deposit fees for use consistent with this policy will be set annually at a the Murweh Shire Council Budget Meeting on approval of the Fees and Charges.*
- *Charges for the security deposit and hire of the Community Bus outside of this Policy will be set annually at a the Murweh Shire Council Budget Meeting on approval of the Fees and Charges.*

13.1. Bus Hire

The Murweh Shire Community Bus is hired free of charges to the users identified in this policy as having a community benefit.

Hirers of the Murweh Shire Community Bus identified in this policy as having a community benefit will pay a security deposit with the amount payable being available at the Murweh Shire Council Fees and Charges schedule.

Council will only consider hiring the Murweh Shire Community Bus to non-community benefit applicants in times of market failure or times of emergency (eg: when there is not a suitable commercial bus available to hire for the organisation or a genuine emergency exists).

Any application for the hire of the Murweh Shire Community Bus outside of this policy shall be in writing and will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Council where practicable.

Security deposit and hire fees payable for users outside of this policy are available at the Murweh Shire Council Fees and Charges schedule.

13.2. Clean and Tidy State

Vehicles must be returned to their origin point in a clean and tidy state. This applies to both the interior and exterior of the vehicle.

Vehicles returned to their origin in a dirty condition will attract an additional minimal charge of \$100.00 or the actual cost of cleaning - whichever is the greater to cover the costs of cleaning.

13.3. Fuel

Vehicle must be returned to their origin point with a full tank of fuel. Vehicles returned with less than a full tank of fuel will be liable for the replacement costs of the fuel.

Community Bus Policy

If a hirer is unable to refuel a vehicle, they should notify the Council Office so that arrangements can be made to refuel the vehicle and invoice the hirer.

13.4. Late Charge

Vehicles not returned by a time considered appropriate by the Council Office may attract a further penalty of not less than the minimum daily charge for that vehicle or the possible forfeit of the security deposit. And where that delay causes another group or individuals to have their travel plans disrupted, may cause the Council to revoke or refuse any application or permission for the use of this vehicle in the future.

14. Grievances

Complaints concerning Council vehicles should be made to the Chief Executive Officer. Any disciplinary action considered necessary following the investigation of complaints will be in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.

Approval

Chief Executive Officer	Bruce Scott		
Date:	16 July 2025	Signature:	