

# Review of Divisional Boundaries

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**2019 FINAL DETERMINATION**  
GOLD COAST CITY COUNCIL

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## INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Change Commission (Change Commission) is an independent body established under the *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)* (the Act). The Change Commission is responsible for periodically reviewing the internal boundaries of divided councils so that each division has relatively the same number of enrolled voters. This upholds the key democratic principle of ‘one vote, one value’, by ensuring each person’s vote carries the same weight.

The Change Commission has finalised its assessment of the Gold Coast City Council’s divisions. This report outlines the recommended divisional boundaries and sets out the reasons for the Change Commission’s decisions. Maps of the final boundaries are attached at Appendix A.

The Change Commission for this review consisted of:

- Mr Pat Vidgen, Electoral Commissioner;
- Mr Wade Lewis, Casual Commissioner; and
- Mr Peter McGraw, Casual Commissioner.

The casual commissioners were appointed by the Governor in Council on 1 November 2018.

## Background

On 9 April 2019, the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, The Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe MP referred a divisional boundary review of the Gold Coast City Council (see Appendix B).

In conducting its assessment, the Change Commission was legally required to ensure each division of the Council has a reasonable proportion of enrolled voters, herein referred to as ‘quota’. Community interests, public submissions and easy-to-identify boundaries were also considered.

Table 1 shows the Council’s enrolment quota as at 31 January 2019 and the projected quota for 31 March 2024.

| <b>Table 1 – Current and Projected Enrolment Quota</b> |                        |                      |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|
|  | <b>31 January 2019</b> | <b>31 March 2024</b> |
| <b>Number of divisions</b>                             | 14                     | 14                   |
| <b>Enrolment</b>                                       | 378,059                | 418,146              |
| <b>Quota per division</b>                              | 27,004                 | 29,868               |
| <b>Quota (+10%) per division</b>                       | 29,705                 | 32,855               |
| <b>Quota (-10%) per division</b>                       | 24,304                 | 26,881               |

### **Determining the quota**

A quota is determined by dividing the total number of enrolled voters by the number of councillors (other than the mayor), plus or minus 10%. The Change Commission also considers projected enrolment, so the divisions remain in quota for as long as possible.

Current enrolment data has been sourced from Queensland's electoral roll and projected enrolment data from the Queensland Government Statistician's Office of Queensland Treasury. Projections are based on the timing of future local government quadrennial elections.

Enrolment information is based on Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1). SA1s are geographical units used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the release of census data. According to the ABS most SA1s have a population of between 200 to 800 persons with an average population of approximately 400 people.

Current and projected enrolment data is available for download on the Gold Coast City local government review webpage on the Electoral Commission of Queensland's (ECQ) website.

### **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The Change Commission may conduct its assessments in any way it deems appropriate, unless the Minister has provided specific directions.

The process for this review was:

1. Inviting suggestions
2. Publication of the Change Commission's proposal
3. Inviting comments on the proposal
4. Publication of the Change Commission's final determination report
5. Final determination report provided to the Minister for Local Government, for implementation by the Governor in Council
6. New boundaries come into effect at the 2020 Local Government Quadrennial Election

## Existing Divisions

The Gold Coast City Council has 378,059 voters and is divided into fourteen single-member electoral divisions plus a mayor.

Table 2 shows the current and projected enrolment for the Council's existing divisional boundaries. As at 31 January 2019, Divisions 1, 3 and 10 were out of quota and in 2024, Divisions 1, 3, 8, 10 and 12 are projected to be out of quota.

| <b>Table 2 – Summary of Enrolment for the Existing Divisions</b> |                                   |                                 |   |                                 |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Division</b>  | <b>Enrolment as at 31/01/2019</b> | <b>(%) Deviation from Quota</b> | <b>Projected Enrolment as at 31/03/2024</b> | <b>(%) Deviation from Quota</b> |
| Division 1   | 34,264                            | <b>26.88</b>                    | 39,438                                      | <b>32.04</b>                    |
| Division 2   | 26,979                            | -0.09                           | 30,176                                      | 1.03                            |
| Division 3   | 33,033                            | <b>22.33</b>                    | 41,157                                      | <b>37.8</b>                     |
| Division 4   | 27,614                            | 2.26                            | 30,254                                      | 1.29                            |
| Division 5   | 26,641                            | -1.35                           | 28,671                                      | -4.01                           |
| Division 6   | 27,180                            | 0.65                            | 30,072                                      | 0.68                            |
| Division 7   | 25,287                            | -6.36                           | 28,124                                      | -5.84                           |
| Division 8   | 24,561                            | <b>-9.05</b>                    | 25,994                                      | <b>-12.97</b>                   |
| Division 9   | 25,179                            | -6.76                           | 28,000                                      | -6.25                           |
| Division 10  | 23,634                            | <b>-12.48</b>                   | 26,342                                      | <b>-11.8</b>                    |
| Division 11  | 27,209                            | 0.76                            | 28,853                                      | -3.4                            |
| Division 12  | 25,076                            | -7.14                           | 26,393                                      | <b>-11.63</b>                   |
| Division 13  | 25,404                            | -5.93                           | 27,165                                      | <b>-9.05</b>                    |
| Division 14  | 25,998                            | -3.73                           | 27,507                                      | -7.9                            |

## Public Suggestions

The Change Commission sought public suggestions to assist in developing its proposal. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Gold Coast Bulletin and on the ECQ's website and social media platforms.

Suggestions were invited from 27 April 2019 to 5pm 20 May 2019. Fifty-one submissions were received, and the key themes discussed in the proposed determination are provided below. To view the submissions, see Appendix C.

A significant number of suggestions requested changes that were outside the scope of this review and were unable to be considered by the Change Commission, including:

- twenty-four submissions proposed an additional division be created in the north of the Council area and another submission suggested two new divisions be created;
- two suggestions asked for the existing divisional boundaries to be retained; and
- one submission requested the Tamborine Mountain area be transferred from the Scenic Rim Regional Council to the Gold Coast City Council.

As discussed in the Proposed Determination Report, the Change Commission is unable to transfer parts of other Council areas or create additional divisions, unless a change proposal is referred by the Minister for Local Government. As these types of changes can have significant financial impacts on a Council and/or on ratepayers, consultation and research generally need to occur before a proposal of this nature is referred to the Change Commission.

While the Gold Coast City Council did not provide a submission, it did publish boundary change maps in local newspapers earlier in the year. As a result, several submissions commented on the Council's published maps. As these maps were not submitted to the Change Commission, they have not been discussed in either the proposal or this final determination report. However, the public suggestions commenting on those maps were useful and helped inform the Change Commission's deliberations.

Key themes to emerge from comments on the Council's maps included:

- the importance of holding the Southport CBD together in a single division;
- that the community of Nerang should remain united within a division; and
- that Bonogin should not move from Division 9 to Division 13.

The Change Commission agreed with these suggestions and proposed boundaries with those community interests in mind. The proposed boundaries united the suburb of Southport within Division 6 and maintained the current boundaries for the suburbs of Nerang and Bonogin.

### **Proposed Determination**

The Change Commission published its proposal on 27 June 2019 along with an invitation for public comments. Advertisements were placed in the Gold Coast Bulletin, on the ECQ website and its social media platforms.

The proposed boundaries brought enrolment in each division into quota, while also catering for the significant growth projected in certain parts of the region. The Change Commission made a concerted effort to consider feedback from the public suggestions and created clearly identifiable boundaries by uniting suburbs and following roads.

## Comments on the Proposal

Comments on the proposal were invited from 27 June 2019 to 5pm 15 July 2019. Thirty comments were received during this timeframe, with an additional submission received late. The late submission was accepted as it was received by another authority during the submissions period due to a mailing address error. These comments are available to view at Appendix D.

Twelve comments expressed support for the proposal, with many noting their general support, and others voicing approval for particular divisions. Some of the paraphrased feedback includes:

- the proposed boundaries recognise and support the importance of keeping communities united and respect the clear and obvious boundary between the east and west communities of the Gold Coast;
- the divisions appear to be equitable in terms of population while allowing for the inevitable growth in the north of the city;
- the M1 Pacific Motorway is a sensible and strong boundary between the east and west communities of the Gold Coast;
- the Commission took note of public comments regarding Bonogin and agreed to keep the entire suburbs of Southport and Nerang within their respective divisions;
- pleased Division 5 has retained its integrity of boundaries, that Division 13 is a more consolidated urban division, and that Division 10 appears to bring together high-density areas and community of interest for that type of development;
- support the Southport CBD being retained in a single division and note positive inclusions of the University, TAFE and other precincts in Division 6;
- the public submissions regarding Division 9 are appropriately reflected in the proposal, specifically Reedy Creek being added to Division 9, Worongary being retained in Division 9 and the community of Highland Park being transferred to Division 5; and
- support the boundaries for Division 11, as it unites all of Robina and the Varsity Lakes component is unchanged.

### *Changes to the Proposed Boundaries*

A few modifications have been made to the proposed boundaries based on feedback received in three comments on the proposal, two of which came from councillors:

- unite The Haven and Riverstone Crossing estates in Maudsland within one division;
- retain the small park between Universal Street and Binstead Way in Division 2; and
- have the boundary between Divisions 2 and 5 follow Binstead Way, Kopps Road and the Gaven Arterial Road ending at the intersection with Maudsland Road.

All three submitters sought to unite the communities of Riverstone Crossing and The Haven however only one recommended they be placed in Division 2. As Division 2 is unable to accommodate the additional electors, the Change Commission transferred The Haven into Division 3 as suggested by the councillors. As this change could be accommodated from an enrolment perspective and the other changes improved the boundaries, they have been implemented.

Maps of the proposed Divisions 2, 3 and 5 and an overview map have been attached at Appendix E and can be compared with the final division maps at Appendix A.

### *Other Comments on the Proposal*

Several alternative proposals or comments opposing changes were also received and are discussed below:

- Five comments discussed the suburb of Helensvale being split between Divisions 2 and 7, raising concerns about 'The Surrounds' estate being placed in Division 7. While the Change Commission considered this, as The Surrounds estate is anticipated to grow significantly by 2024, it was not possible to accommodate the suggestions to unite this area.
- One of the councillors requested the northern boundary between Divisions 2 and 3 follow the centre of the Coomera River. It is noted that the Coomera River is the proposed boundary and follows the gazetted Hope Island / Coomera locality boundary around Foxwell Island.
- One of the councillors requested the areas of Parkridge Drive (proposed Division 7) and Riverwood Drive (proposed Division 8) be returned to their existing location in Division 5. The Change Commission did not implement this suggestion as the proposed boundaries unite the entire localities of Molendinar and Ashmore within Divisions 7 and 8 respectively, while also using the Pacific Motorway as an easily identifiable boundary between the east and west Gold Coast divisions.
- Another submission requested Division 11's boundaries extend north to Boowaggan Road, connecting the Merrimac and Robina residential communities. This change was not supported as it would split the Merrimac suburb, cause Division 11 to exceed the enrolment quota and require boundary changes to the surrounding divisions.
- There were requests for the Helensvale Westfield Shopping Centre and Helensvale train station to remain in Division 2 rather than be transferred to Division 7. The Change Commission did not agree with these suggestions, as there are no electors with registered addresses at the aforementioned precincts.
- One submitter expressed opposition to having residents south of Christine Avenue and east of Mattocks Road part of the 'Mermaid division'. The Change Commission notes that the part of Burleigh Waters bounded by Mattocks Road, Christine Avenue, Bermuda Street and Reedy Creek Road has not changed locations and remains in Division 11.
- One sitting councillor suggested that Gold Coast's divisions be renamed and renumbered and provided a map to illustrate the changes. The same map was included in another comment; however, this submission made no mention of renaming the divisions. The Change Commission was not persuaded to renumber or rename the divisions at this time. It noted that all divided councils, except Brisbane, use numbers and that this can have considerable benefits, including for example, cost saving by reducing the need for renaming and renumbering changes.
- Two comments discussed the possibility that boundaries had been weighted to favour councillors, or that the review was a gerrymander to influence the outcome of elections. The Change Commission notes that it is an independent body that is legally required to conduct divisional boundary assessments so that each division of a Council has a similar number of voters and in doing so, ensure each person's vote has the same value.



- One person commented that the Council's name is 'City of Gold Coast' and that the review documentation should be updated. The Change Commission has used the official name as prescribed in the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.
- One submitter requested that their Varsity Lakes address remain in Division 11. The Change Commission notes the entire Varsity Lakes suburb is located in Division 11 in both the proposed and final boundaries.
- One commented that Division 2's boundaries should remain the same as it is too large for the councillor to look after the residents. It is not possible for Division 2 to remain unchanged, due to the amount of growth in the north of the Council area.
- The Change Commission modelled a request to unite Pacific Fair, Broadbeach South Light Rail Station, Broadbeach State School and Pratten Park within Division 10 by extending the boundary south to Peerless and Surfers Avenues. This change was not supported due to the enrolment impacts it would have upon the divisions in the area.
- A submission raised concerns about the workload in the proposed Division 10, as a result of having Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach in the same division. Another submitter wanted the Broadbeach locality to be part of Division 12. To accommodate either submission would require a significant reconfiguration of the divisions in this area. As the proposed boundaries balance enrolment and follow suburbs and prominent roads, the Change Commission has retained the proposed boundaries.

#### *Out of Scope*

A few comments also discussed matters that are outside the scope of this review:

- A request for Beechmont to be included in the Gold Coast City Council rather than the Scenic Rim Regional Council. As discussed for the out of scope public suggestions, the Change Commission cannot transfer parts of other Council areas unless a Ministerial referral to review such a change is received.
- That the boundaries would result in property devaluation or impact home loan approvals. The Change Commission is required to redraw local government boundaries to ensure each elector has equal democratic representation.
- That the enrolment quota should be changed and should consider non-residents / landowners. It is important to note the Change Commission is bound by legislation to ensure each ward meets the enrolment quota. The Act designates a formula for determining the quota and this is based on enrolled voter numbers.

## FINAL DETERMINATION

After assessing the material submitted and having considered the requirements of the Act, the Change Commission is recommending the proposed boundaries, with a few minor adjustments, become the final divisions for the Gold Coast City Council.

The modifications to the proposed boundaries include:

- containing The Haven and Riverstone Crossing estates within Division 3;
- retaining the small park between Universal Street and Binstead Way in Division 2, so that the boundary follows Binstead Way without deviation; and
- having the boundary between Divisions 2 and 5 follow Binstead Way, Kopps Road and the Gaven Arterial Road ending at the intersection with Maudsland Road.

The reasoning for these changes is provided in the 'Comments on the Proposal' section of the report.

The Change Commission is satisfied the final boundaries meet the enrolment requirements of the Act, while also balancing the expressed needs and interests of the community. It is noted that the implementation of this recommendation is expected to result in the following divisional enrolment:

| <b>Table 3 – Summary of Enrolment for the Final Divisions</b> |                                   |                                 |   |                                 |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Division</b>   | <b>Enrolment as at 31/01/2019</b> | <b>(%) Deviation from Quota</b> | <b>Projected Enrolment as at 31/03/2024</b> | <b>(%) Deviation from Quota</b> |
| Division 1  | 24,705                            | -8.51                           | 31,140                                      | 4.26                            |
| Division 2  | 27,989                            | 3.65                            | 31,483                                      | 5.41                            |
| Division 3  | 25,579                            | -5.28                           | 30,693                                      | 2.76                            |
| Division 4  | 27,575                            | 2.11                            | 30,179                                      | 1.04                            |
| Division 5  | 28,466                            | 5.41                            | 30,498                                      | 2.11                            |
| Division 6  | 25,336                            | -6.18                           | 28,200                                      | -5.58                           |
| Division 7  | 28,578                            | 5.83                            | 30,723                                      | 2.86                            |
| Division 8  | 26,776                            | -0.85                           | 28,706                                      | -3.89                           |
| Division 9  | 27,201                            | 0.73                            | 30,334                                      | 1.56                            |
| Division 10   | 27,532                            | 1.95                            | 31,103                                      | 4.14                            |
| Division 11   | 27,585                            | 2.15                            | 29,248                                      | -2.07                           |
| Division 12   | 27,006                            | 0.01                            | 28,610                                      | -4.21                           |
| Division 13   | 26,910                            | -0.35                           | 28,901                                      | -3.24                           |
| Division 14   | 26,821                            | -0.68                           | 28,328                                      | -5.15                           |

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Change Commission has provided its assessment to the Minister for Local Government and recommends the Governor in Council implement its final boundaries.

The Change Commission's final recommendation is as follows:

- for the purpose of the 2020 Local Government Quadrennial Election, the Gold Coast City Council be redivided into fourteen divisions as shown in the maps contained in Appendix A.

In accordance with the Act, the Change Commission has published a notice of results in the Government Gazette, a newspaper circulating in the local government area and on the ECQ website.



**Pat Vidgen PSM**  
**Electoral Commissioner**



**Wade Lewis**  
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