

Review of Divisional Boundaries

2019 FINAL DETERMINATION
TABLELANDS REGIONAL 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 Tablelands Regional Council’s divisions on Friday, 4 October 2019. 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 consists 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 28 March 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 Tablelands Regional 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.

Table 1 – Current and Projected Enrolment Quota		
	31 January 2019	31 March 2024
Number of divisions	6	6
Enrolment	17,200	17,964
Average enrolment per division	2,867	2,994
Average enrolment (+10%) per division	3,153	3,293
Average enrolment (-10%) per division	2,580	2,695

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 are available for download on the Tablelands Regional Council 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 is as follows:

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 Tablelands Regional Council has 17,200 voters and is divided into six 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, Division 2 was out of quota and in 2024, Division 2 is projected to be further out of quota, while Divisions 1 and 5 are close to exceeding the upper limits of the quota.

Division	Enrolment as at 31/01/2019	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment	Projected Enrolment as at 31/03/2024	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment
Division 1	3,114	8.63	3,273	9.32
Division 2	2,514	-12.3	2,577	-13.93
Division 3	2,909	1.48	2,973	-0.7
Division 4	2,977	3.85	3,106	3.74
Division 5	3,063	6.85	3,270	9.22
Division 6	2,623	-8.5	2,765	-7.65

Public Suggestions

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

Suggestions were invited from 27 April 2019 to 5pm 13 May 2019. Two submissions were received and are available to view at Appendix C.

One submission requested the entire Atherton township be contained within the same division. The Change Commission modelled this suggestion, however found the number of enrolled voters exceeded the legislated enrolment quota. As a result, the Change Commission was only able to partially adopt this suggestion, proposing to unite as much of central Atherton as possible within Division 5.

The other submitter requested the Change Commission retain the Council's existing electoral arrangements (i.e. six single-member divisions and a mayor). This submission appears to be in response to the Council's earlier consultation with the community regarding alternative electoral arrangements, for example an undivided (no divisions) or multi-member divisional structure. As a change to the Council's electoral arrangements has not been referred to the Change Commission, this review has maintained the existing arrangements.

Proposed Determination

The Change Commission published its proposal and invited public comments on 13 September 2019. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Atherton Tablelander and on the ECQ's website and social media.

The Change Commission's proposal considered both current and projected enrolment data as well as the views expressed in the public submissions. A concerted effort was made to follow suburb boundaries, so that entire localities were united within individual divisions.

Comments on the Proposal

Comments on the proposal were invited from 13 September 2019 to 5pm on 30 September 2019. Six comments were received and can be viewed at Appendix D.

All of the comments discussed Herberton, with one expressing support for the realignment of Division 2 to incorporate Herberton. The same submitter also noted their desire to retain the existing electoral arrangements with six councillors and a mayor. As this review is balancing enrolment in the existing divisions, it is noted that the level of representation remains the same.

The other five comments expressed opposition to the proposal to unite all of Herberton within Division 2, citing reasons such as its proximity to and connections with Atherton, representation concerns, and the geographical size of Division 2. One submitter recommended retaining the existing boundaries, while two others proposed the following alternatives:

- Take in more of Wondecla, right to the start of the Herberton township area as well as additional portions of Upper Barron and Wongabel, noting the Kennedy Highway is a natural transport link. It was also suggested Division 2 stretch along the Kennedy Highway into Atherton to give the Division a stronger link with its regional centre.
- Division 2 should include Wondecla and some of Upper Barron Road.

The Change Commission noted it is unable to retain Division 2's existing boundaries, as it has fallen below the legislated enrolment quota. The alternative proposed boundaries from the submitters were modelled however have not been implemented for the following reasons:

- Separating Atherton and Herberton into different divisions balances enrolment more evenly across the Council's divisions. In doing so, this makes it more likely the boundaries will endure for more than one election.
- As the size of Division 2 was a concern for the submitters, it was noted that the proposed boundary increases its size by approximately four square kilometres (4km²), whereas adding Wondecla and Upper Barron (while excluding Herberton) increases the size of Division 2 by approximately one hundred and thirty-two square kilometres (132km²).
- The Change Commission also decided that it would not be in the public interest to introduce a significant new change at this stage in the review, as residents in Wondecla and Upper Barron would not have the opportunity to provide further feedback.

FINAL DETERMINATION

After assessing the material submitted and having considered the requirements of the Act, it is recommended that the proposed boundaries become the final divisions for the Tablelands Regional Council.

It is noted that the implementation of this recommendation is expected to result in the following divisional enrolment:

Table 3 – Summary of Enrolment for the Final Divisions				
Division	Enrolment as at 31/01/2019	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment	Projected Enrolment as at 31/03/2024	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment
Division 1	2,859	-0.27	3,072	2.61
Division 2	2,893	0.92	2,975	-0.63
Division 3	2,834	-1.14	2,913	-2.71
Division 4	2,968	3.53	3,065	2.37
Division 5	2,889	0.78	3,033	1.3
Division 6	2,757	-3.83	2,906	-2.94

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 Tablelands Regional Council be redivided into six divisions as shown in the maps 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.



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