

Review of Divisional Boundaries

2019 FINAL DETERMINATION
FRASER COAST 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 Fraser Coast Regional 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 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 3 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 Fraser Coast 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 feedback and easily identifiable 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	10	10
Enrolment	76,344	80,837
Average enrolment per division	7,634	8,084
Average enrolment (+10%) per division	8,398	8,892
Average enrolment (-10%) per division	6,871	7,275

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 Fraser Coast Regional 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 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 Fraser Coast Regional Council has 76,344 voters and is divided into ten 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 3, 5 and 8 were out of quota and Division 4 was close to the quota, and in 2024, Divisions 3, 4,5 and 8 are projected to be out of 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	7,076	-7.31	7,505	-7.16
Division 2	7,657	0.3	8,230	1.81
Division 3	6,764	-11.4	6,856	-15.19
Division 4	6,885	-9.82	7,019	-13.17
Division 5	8,425	10.36	9,236	14.25
Division 6	7,776	1.85	8,195	1.38
Division 7	8,038	5.29	8,610	6.51
Division 8	8,693	13.87	9,351	15.68
Division 9	7,639	0.06	8,103	0.24
Division 10	7,391	-3.19	7,732	-4.35

Public Suggestions

The Change Commission sought public suggestions to assist in developing its proposal. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Fraser Coast Chronicle 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 Burrum Heads be included in the Hervey Bay electorate and not the Maryborough electorate. This submission appeared to be discussing State electorates which is out of the scope of this review. For this review's purpose however, it was not sustainable to accommodate this suggestion from an enrolment perspective.

The other suggestion requested the suburb of Aldershot be included in the Maryborough division. The Change Commission modelled this submission but decided to include more of central Maryborough in Division 3 instead as it better balanced enrolment across Divisions 1, 3 and 4.

Proposed Determination

The Change Commission published its proposal on 21 June 2019 and the following day public comments were invited. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Fraser Coast Chronicle 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 within the public submissions. The proposed divisions were all within quota and the Change Commission made a concerted effort to follow suburb boundaries, thereby uniting entire localities within individual divisions.

Comments on the Proposal

Comments on the proposal were invited from 22 June 2019 to 5pm on 8 July 2019. Seven comments were received and are available to view at Appendix D.

One submitter contributed four separate comments, which have been counted as a single submission. The submission focused on Divisions 1, 5 and 8 and expressed opposition to the proposed placement of Burrum Heads in Division 1. While recognising the desire for coastal areas to remain together, the Change Commission noted that as Division 5 is currently out of quota (10.36% above average) and Division 1 needs to increase its enrolment (-7.31% below average), placing Burrum Heads within Division 1 has better balanced enrolment in both Divisions.

This same submitter also suggested that parts of Eli Waters and Urraween west of Maryborough Hervey Bay Road should be transferred from Division 8 into Division 5, and that Division 8 should be extended further south to incorporate developing areas. Another submitter made a similar request regarding the sections of Eli Waters and Urraween, and also suggested Division 8 extend south to unite the Sunshine Acres suburb. The Change Commission has adopted these changes, as the roads and railway make easily identifiable boundaries, and have allowed a more even distribution of rural suburbs between Division 5 and Division 8.

The other comments received are discussed below:

- One submission opposed the combination of rural and urban areas within the proposed Division 2 and questioned whether basing the assessment on each division having a similar number of voters is fair. It is important to note the Change Commission is bound by legislation to ensure each division meets the enrolment quota. The Act designates a formula for determining the quota and this is based on enrolled voter numbers. The Change Commission also notes that reconfiguring the boundaries of Divisions 1, 2 and 4 to share the rural areas, better balances enrolment and also follows the direction of the road networks in the area.
- Another submitter opposed the combination of large rural allotments with beachside areas in Division 1, noting Yengarie, Oakhurst and Burrum Heads have different needs and should not be included. The Change Commission notes that Yengarie and Oakhurst are currently in Division 1 and that the proposed and final boundaries have maintained the status quo. Regarding Burrum Heads, as Division 1 needed to gain electors and considering the close proximity to Howard through connecting road systems, the Change Commission has retained the proposed boundaries.

- Two submissions discussed the Division 1 area, with one noting they did not wish to lose their current representative in the Tinana region. The Change Commission was not able to accommodate this request, but notes the final boundaries unite the entire suburb of Tinana within Division 2. The other submitter expressed their support for the proposed boundaries but noted Aldershot should be included in the Maryborough based Division 3. The Change Commission acknowledges the close proximity of Aldershot to Maryborough, however due to Division 8 having contracted in the north, Division 3 has expanded to take in Dundathu, Prawle and the surrounding suburbs which also have connectivity with this Division.

CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

After reviewing its proposed boundaries and having considered feedback from the public submissions, the Change Commission has made modifications to Divisions 1, 3, 5 and 8.

Maps of these proposed divisions are attached at Appendix E and can be compared with the final division maps at Appendix A. The changes are discussed below:

Divisions 1 and 3

A small realignment has been made to the shared boundary between Divisions 1 and 3. The eastern boundary of Division 1 has expanded slightly to follow the railway line, rather than deviating to follow the Saltwater Creek as it does currently. This change does not impact any voters.

Divisions 5 and 8

After assessing the public feedback received, the Change Commission has also realigned the boundaries of Divisions 5 and 8 to accommodate a couple of submissions and to unite the suburb of Sunshine Acres, which is currently split by the existing boundary.

The parts of the Urraween and Eli Waters suburbs that are situated west of the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road have been transferred to Division 5. In doing so, this has improved the current and projected enrolment outlook for this Division.

The southern boundary of Division 8 has been expanded to follow the Susan River, while its western boundary now follows the railway line, uniting the Sunshine Acres locality entirely within this Division.

FINAL DETERMINATION

It is recommended that the proposed boundaries, with the aforementioned modifications, become the final divisions for the Fraser Coast Regional Council. The Change Commission is satisfied these boundaries meet the enrolment requirements of the Act, while also balancing the expressed needs of the community. 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	7,475	-2.09	8,059	-0.31
Division 2	7,737	1.34	8,368	3.52
Division 3	7,690	0.73	7,796	-3.56
Division 4	7,790	2.04	8,028	-0.69
Division 5	7,571	-0.83	8,203	1.48
Division 6	7,776	1.85	8,195	1.38
Division 7	8,038	5.29	8,610	6.51
Division 8	7,237	-5.21	7,743	-4.21
Division 9	7,639	0.06	8,103	0.24
Division 10	7,391	-3.19	7,732	-4.35

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 Fraser Coast Regional Council be redivided into ten 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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