

Review of Divisional Boundaries

2019 FINAL DETERMINATION
GYMPIE 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 Gympie 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 15 February 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 Gympie 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	8	8
Enrolment	36,736	38,783
Average enrolment per division	4,592	4,848
Average enrolment (+10%) per division	5,051	5,333
Average Enrolment (-10%) per division	4,133	4,363

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 Gympie 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 Gympie Regional Council has 36,736 voters and is divided into eight 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 4 was out of quota and Division 7 was close to the upper limit of the quota. It is projected Divisions 3, 4 and 7 will be further out of quota by 2024.

Division	Enrolment as at 31/01/2019	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment	Projected Enrolment as at 31/03/2024	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment
Division 1	4,969	8.21	5,313	9.59
Division 2	4,471	-2.64	4,758	-1.85
Division 3	4,960	8.01	5,405	11.49
Division 4	4,014	-12.59	4,107	-15.28
Division 5	4,442	-3.27	4,623	-4.64
Division 6	4,395	-4.29	4,544	-6.27
Division 7	5,045	9.86	5,443	12.28
Division 8	4,440	-3.31	4,590	-5.32

Public Suggestions

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

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

While two of the submissions were out of scope for this divisional boundary review, one suggestion requested adjustments to a number of boundaries including:

- transferring some of the Southside suburb nearest Kidd Bridge from Division 7 to Division 4;
- transferring the areas west of the Mary River (The Palms, Glastonbury and Widgee Crossing South) from Division 3 into Division 6;
- including the western portion of Division 1 in Division 2; and
- moving the areas of Kybong, Tandur and Traverston from Division 8 to Division 5.

The Change Commission adopted most of the above suggestions in its proposal.

Proposed Determination

The Change Commission published its proposal and invited public comments on 26 July 2019. Advertisements were placed in the Gympie Times 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 26 July 2019 to 5pm on 12 August 2019. Four comments were received and can be viewed at Appendix D.

One comment requested the Council become undivided (no divisions), however this is outside the scope of this review and was unable to be considered by the Change Commission.

The other three comments conveyed opposition to the proposed transfer of the Wallu area from Division 1 to Division 2. Two of the comments recommended the Wallu area be returned to Division 1, noting Wallu has a strong connection to the Cooloola Coast area, and that separating the two communities would be alienating for the Wallu residents. The third comment recommended the Change Commission perform alternative boundary changes to reduce enrolment in Division 1 and suggested three different options.

While the Change Commission understood the community's concerns regarding the connection between the Wallu and Cooloola Cove areas, it noted that returning Wallu creates a significant risk of Division 1 exceeding the enrolment quota for the 2020 election. As the primary purpose of this review is to ensure each division has a similar number of voters so that each person's vote has the same value, the Change Commission has been unable to accommodate these proposals.

The Change Commission also considered the request for more significant changes in the area. While this suggestion has merit, it was noted that changes had been proposed in this area during the 2017 State redistribution and had received considerable community opposition. As there are no further opportunities for public consultation, the Change Commission determined it was too late in the review process to implement changes that would have significant impacts on many, if not all, of Gympie's other divisions. It was therefore decided that the proposed boundaries would be accepted as the final boundaries.

The Change Commission recognises the likelihood that the growth expected in Division 1 may trigger another review prior to the 2024 election. It is therefore recommended that if the Council and community wish to retain divisions, that they initiate a process to examine how these boundaries can accommodate the legislated enrolment requirements of the Act and the local communities' aspirations.

FINAL DETERMINATION

After assessing the material submitted and having considered the requirements of the Act, it is recommended the proposed boundaries become the final divisions for the Gympie 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	4,905	6.82	5,247	8.23
Division 2	4,462	-2.83	4,745	-2.12
Division 3	4,356	-5.14	4,740	-2.23
Division 4	4,610	0.39	4,735	-2.33
Division 5	4,514	-1.7	4,695	-3.15
Division 6	4,669	1.68	4,881	0.68
Division 7	4,540	-1.13	4,884	0.75
Division 8	4,680	1.92	4,856	0.17

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 Gympie Regional Council be redivided into eight 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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