

Review of Divisional Boundaries

2019 FINAL DETERMINATION
ROCKHAMPTON 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 Rockhampton Regional Council's divisions on Friday, 25 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 PSM, 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 26 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 Rockhampton 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	7	7
Enrolment	54,140	56,880
Average enrolment per division	7,734	8,126
Average enrolment (+10%) per division	8,507	8,939
Average enrolment (-10%) per division	6,961	7,313

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 Rockhampton 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 Rockhampton Regional Council has 54,140 voters and is divided into seven (7) 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 2 and 4 were out of quota and in 2024, both of these Divisions are projected to be further 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	7,878	1.86	8,620	6.08
Division 2	6,868	-11.2	6,771	-16.67
Division 3	7,385	-4.52	7,637	-6.01
Division 4	8,741	13.02	9,881	21.6
Division 5	8,015	3.63	8,152	0.32
Division 6	8,145	5.31	8,168	0.52
Division 7	7,108	-8.1	7,651	-5.84

Public Suggestions

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

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

While noting a need for major internal boundary realignments, the Rockhampton Regional Council recommended minor changes until the completion of the referred external boundary review between the Rockhampton Regional Council and Livingstone Shire Council. Six internal SA1 transfers were recommended and the Change Commission implemented four of these in its proposal, in the West Rockhampton and Stanwell areas. However, to further balance enrolment the Change Commission also proposed additional realignments. Minimal changes were proposed for Divisions 1, 2, 3 and 7 with more significant changes proposed for Divisions 4, 5 and 6 to bring Division 4 into quota and manage its projected growth.

The Council's suggested changes in the Gracemere and Limestone Creek areas were considered but not implemented, with the Change Commission noting that its proposed boundaries created a Gracemere-based Division 4 and that the Limestone Creek area appears more connected by the road networks to Division 1 than Division 2.

One submitter stated that Mount Morgan should not be in the same division as Parkhurst. It was noted that these localities are currently separated, with Mount Morgan in Division 5 and Parkhurst in Division 1. However, the Change Commission acknowledged the possibility that this request was more generally commenting on the large distances between Mount Morgan and other localities within Division 5. The proposed changes transferred Mount Morgan and the surrounding localities into Division 6 where it was noted that there is connectivity via the Burnett Highway.

The remaining submissions raised issues that were unable to be considered in this internal boundary review. Two related to the external boundary review and requested suburbs be transferred from the Livingstone Shire Council to the Rockhampton Regional Council. The other submitter appeared to be requesting a change to the electoral arrangements of Council to become undivided (no divisions). This was also outside the scope of this review.

Proposed Determination

The Change Commission published its proposal on 13 September 2019 and on the same day public comments were invited. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin 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. Thirty-one (31) comments were received and can be viewed at Appendix D.

One comment requested the Council become undivided or that the existing divisional boundaries be retained until the divisions are abolished. The Change Commission was unable to consider this submission, noting the referral for this review is to balance enrolment in the Council's divisions.

A key theme in the comments was public opposition to splitting Wandal between Divisions 5 and 7 and having the boundary cross the Fitzroy River. More than half of the comments discussed this proposed change, advising that the river should be retained as a natural and definable boundary and that the communities on either side of the river should remain united on their respective sides. It was also noted in one comment that the proposed boundary of Lion Creek Road divides sporting and entertainment precincts.

Another key concern was the proposed changes between Divisions 5 and 6, with Mount Morgan, Bouldercombe, The Range, Allenstown and the surroundings areas discussed by submitters. Several comments objected to changes between these divisions and raised community interest concerns such as the urban and rural communities having different priorities and requiring separate representation and that the realignments will cause confusion, disruption and instability. Some submitters requested Mount Morgan remain in Division 5 while

The Range and Allenstown remain in Division 6. Similarly, another submitter advised that Mount Morgan and the surrounds share connectivity with Division 5 through Razorback Road to the Capricorn or Burnett Highways.

Several comments discussed the pending external boundary review between the Rockhampton Regional Council and Livingstone Shire Council. The Rockhampton Regional Council recommended its original suggestion involving minor SA1 changes be implemented and requested that any significant changes be delayed until the completion of the external boundary review. Other submitters requested no changes be made until the external boundary review is completed or requested minimal changes such as those recommended by the Council. Some requested areas currently outside the Rockhampton Regional Council, such as Glenlee and Rockyview, be transferred during this review.

The Change Commission acknowledges stakeholder preference for the external boundary review to be resolved prior to divisional boundary realignments being implemented. However, as Division 4 is currently out of quota, Queensland law requires the Change Commission to balance enrolment for the 2020 election. The Change Commission has decided that it is in the public interest for minimal changes to be made to bring Rockhampton's divisions into quota for next year's election. Several of the proposed boundary changes that were designed to accommodate projected growth to 2024 have therefore been reversed. For more information, see the 'Changes to the Proposed Boundaries' section of the report below.

The Change Commission notes that regardless of the outcome of the external boundary review (to be conducted following the 2020 election), Rockhampton's divisional boundaries will require a substantive review in 2023. The Change Commission also wishes to highlight that it may be necessary in the future for the Council's divisions to cross the river. It is therefore recommended that prior to the next divisional boundary review, the Council in consultation with the community, consider where a divisional river crossing may be best placed.

CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

After reviewing its proposed boundaries and having considered feedback from the public submissions, the Change Commission has substantially modified its proposal to minimise change at this time, implementing some minor realignments to Divisions 4, 5, 6 and 7. It has retained the proposed change between Divisions 1 and 2 in the Norman Gardens area and also between Divisions 3 and 7 to unite the Stockland shopping complex in Division 7.

Maps of the proposed divisions are attached at Appendix E and can be compared with the final division maps at Appendix A.

Division 4

Division 4 has mostly returned to follow the existing boundaries, regaining its portion of Bouldercombe that had been proposed to move to Division 6. The Change Commission retained its proposed transfer of the Stanwell and Kabra suburbs to Division 5, noting this brings Division 4's enrolment into quota at 6.99%. The change also unites Stanwell in one division (Division 5) which was recommended by the Council, while the Division 5 Councillor noted that both Stanwell and Kabra share connectivity and interests with Division 5.

It is noted that these boundaries result in Division 4's projected enrolment exceeding the quota in 2024. Generally, the Change Commission would not establish boundaries that are out of quota on the projected enrolment figures, however it has decided that a minimal change model for this determination is in the public interest due to the pending external boundary review.

Divisions 5 & 6

Divisions 5 and 6 have both returned to largely follow the existing divisional boundaries. Division 5 has gained the remainder of Stanwell and the entire Kabra locality from Division 4 as proposed, while a small section of West Rockhampton bounded by North Street Extended, Willis Street and Eton Street has been transferred into Division 6. These changes help balance enrolment between Divisions 4, 5 and 6 for the 2020 election.

Divisions 5 & 7

The Change Commission has reversed its changes between Divisions 5 and 7 so that the boundary follows the locality boundaries along the Fitzroy River.

FINAL DETERMINATION

After assessing the material submitted, the Change Commission is recommending minimal changes to the divisional boundaries of the Rockhampton Regional Council. The Change Commission is satisfied that the final boundaries meet the enrolment requirements of the Act for the 2020 local government election.

The Change Commission notes that the projected enrolment for Division 4 is expected to be out of quota. This decision is based on the pending external boundary review and the possible enrolment exchange between the Rockhampton Regional and Livingstone Shire Councils. It is noted that the implementation of this recommendation is expected to result in the following 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	7,080	-8.46	7,811	-3.87
Division 2	7,666	-0.88	7,580	-6.72
Division 3	7,384	-4.53	7,636	-6.03
Division 4	8,275	6.99	9,380	15.44
Division 5	8,339	7.82	8,511	4.74
Division 6	8,287	7.15	8,310	2.27
Division 7	7,109	-8.08	7,652	-5.83

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 Rockhampton Regional Council be redivided into seven (7) 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.



Pat Vidgen PSM
Electoral Commissioner



Wade Lewis
Casual Commissioner



Peter McGraw
Casual Commissioner

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHANGE COMMISSION

W: www.ecq.qld.gov.au

E: LGCCsubmissions@ecq.qld.gov.au

T: 1300 881 665

P: Local Government Change Commission
GPO Box 1393
BRISBANE QLD 4001