

Review of Divisional Boundaries

2019 FINAL DETERMINATION
TOWNSVILLE 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 Townsville City 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; and
- Mr Wade Lewis, Casual Commissioner.

The casual commissioner was appointed by the Governor in Council on 1 November 2018.

Background

On 17 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 Townsville 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.

| Table 1 – Current and Projected Enrolment Quota | | |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|
| | 31 January 2019 | 31 March 2024 |
| Number of divisions | 10 | 10 |
| Enrolment | 127,521 | 135,928 |
| Average enrolment per division | 12,752 | 13,593 |
| Average enrolment (+10%) per division | 14,027 | 14,952 |
| Average enrolment (-10%) per division | 11,477 | 12,234 |

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 Townsville City 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 Townsville City Council has 127,521 voters and is divided into ten (10) 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 had exceeded the quota and Division 8 was close to the lower limit and in 2024, Divisions 2, 7 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 | 13,221 | 3.68 | 14,649 | 7.77 |
| Division 2 | 14,089 | 10.48 | 16,931 | 24.56 |
| Division 3 | 13,052 | 2.35 | 13,772 | 1.32 |
| Division 4 | 12,642 | -0.86 | 13,013 | -4.27 |
| Division 5 | 12,925 | 1.36 | 13,149 | -3.26 |
| Division 6 | 12,567 | -1.45 | 13,057 | -3.94 |
| Division 7 | 12,204 | -4.3 | 12,219 | -10.11 |
| Division 8 | 11,580 | -9.19 | 11,734 | -13.67 |
| Division 9 | 12,153 | -4.7 | 12,602 | -7.29 |
| Division 10 | 13,088 | 2.63 | 14,802 | 8.9 |

Public Suggestions

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

Suggestions were invited from 27 April 2019 to 5pm 20 May 2019. Two submissions were received and are available to view at Appendix C.

One submitter requested the transfer of Cungulla to the Burdekin Shire Council. This suggestion was outside the scope of this internal boundary review and was unable to be considered. The Change Commission cannot consider transferring parts of one council to a neighbouring council unless an external boundary review has been referred to it.

The other suggestion was from the Townsville City Council on 28 February 2019, and recommended minimal change to balance enrolment in Divisions 2 and 8:

- excise a portion of Mount Louisa south of Bayswater Road from Division 1 and include it in Division 8; and
- excise a portion of Deeragun south of the Pacific Coast Way (Bruce Highway) from Division 2 and include it in Division 1.

The Change Commission supported the need to address enrolment in the areas suggested by the Council, however proposed some alternative or additional modifications to further balance the current and projected divisional enrolment. As both Divisions 7 and 8 are projected to be out of quota in 2024, the Change Commission proposed boundaries that result in a more sustainable enrolment balance for both Divisions. It was proposed that parts of Mount Louisa and Cosgrove be transferred into Division 7, thereby enabling Division 7 to transfer part of Cranbrook in the south into Division 8.

As Division 2 already had too many voters (10.48%) and was projected to be significantly out of quota by 2024 (24.56%), the Change Commission supported the Council's suggestion regarding Deeragun, however proposed transferring the entire suburb rather than a portion into Division 1. Parts of Yabulu, Beach Holm, Black River and Saunders Beach were proposed to be added into Division 2, thereby bringing both Divisions 1 and 2 closer to the average enrolment.

Proposed Determination

The Change Commission published its proposal on 20 September 2019 and invited public comments. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Townsville Bulletin and on the ECQ's social media channels.

The Change Commission's proposal considered both current and projected enrolment data, the views expressed in the public submissions and made a concerted effort to unite entire localities within individual divisions where practicable.

Comments on the Proposal

Comments on the proposal were invited from 20 September 2019 to 5pm 8 October 2019. Three comments were received, as well as one late submission (see Appendix D).

Two submitters raised matters that were unable to be considered by the Change Commission. One comment requested the reinstatement of 12 divisions rather than the existing 10 divisions, while the other noted their opposition to proposed changes in the Cranbrook area based on crime concerns.

The other comment was from the Mayor of the Townsville City Council and noted that the projected enrolment and elector growth rate may be too generous for the Council area over the specified timeframe. The Change Commission reviewed the enrolment figures provided in this submission and is satisfied with the Queensland Government Statistician's Office projections. The submitter recommended a number of alternative boundary realignments which were modelled but not implemented. It was noted that the suggestion to return Saunders Beach and Yabulu to Division 1 would result in Division 2's current enrolment being very close to the lower limit of the quota at -9.07%. The Change Commission's current position is to avoid

introducing further changes to the proposed boundaries unless necessary, noting there is no opportunity for Townsville residents to provide feedback at this stage of the review.

The Change Commission was however persuaded by concerns regarding growth in Division 10 being impacted by the earlier flood event in 2019. The Mayor stated that anticipated developments in the Idalia and Oonoonba suburbs in Division 10 are likely to slow significantly due to flood damage. This was reinforced by the late submission, which requested no boundary changes to Division 10, noting the Railway Estate and Fairfield Waters areas are still recovering from the flood event. The Change Commission has returned part of the Railway Estate area to Division 10 and the remainder of Rosslea to Division 9. It is noted these changes bring enrolment in Division 10 closer to the average and allow for the slower than anticipated growth in the area.

CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

After reviewing its proposed boundaries and having considered feedback from the public suggestions, the Change Commission has made modifications to Divisions 8, 9 and 10.

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 8 & 9

The boundary between Divisions 8 and 9 has been realigned to follow the Rosslea locality boundary along Bowen Road, Sweet Street and Mabin Street. In doing so, this retains the suburb of Rosslea in Division 9 where it is located currently. It has also enabled the Change Commission to return part of the Railway Estate to Division 10, thereby partially accommodating public feedback regarding the impact of an earlier flood event on growth in the area.

Divisions 9 & 10

In its proposal, the Change Commission united the Railway Estate suburb in Division 9 so that the boundary between these Divisions followed the Ross River. However, two comments raised concerns regarding this change as a result of an earlier flood event and one of these submitters also flagged community interest concerns.

The Change Commission has partially accommodated these submissions by returning part of the Railway Estate suburb to Division 10. The boundary between Divisions 9 and 10 has been realigned to follow the railway line, Putt Street and Barnicle Street. In doing so, this has brought Division 10's enrolment closer to the average which should cater for slower growth as the area recovers from the earlier flood event.

FINAL DETERMINATION

After assessing the material submitted and having considered the requirements of the Act, the Change Commission is recommending the proposed boundaries, with the aforementioned changes to Divisions 8, 9 and 10 become the final divisions for the Townsville City 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 | 12,962 | 1.65 | 14,409 | 6 |
| Division 2 | 11,875 | -6.88 | 14,477 | 6.5 |
| Division 3 | 13,590 | 6.57 | 14,346 | 5.54 |
| Division 4 | 12,642 | -0.86 | 13,013 | -4.27 |
| Division 5 | 12,925 | 1.36 | 13,149 | -3.26 |
| Division 6 | 12,567 | -1.45 | 13,057 | -3.94 |
| Division 7 | 13,395 | 5.04 | 13,664 | 0.52 |
| Division 8 | 12,731 | -0.17 | 12,817 | -5.71 |
| Division 9 | 12,410 | -2.68 | 12,876 | -5.27 |
| Division 10 | 12,424 | -2.57 | 14,120 | 3.88 |

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 Townsville City Council be redivided into ten (10) divisions as shown in the maps in Appendix A.

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


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 Electoral Commissioner


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