

Review of Divisional Boundaries

2019 FINAL DETERMINATION
SUNSHINE 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 Sunshine Coast Regional Council's divisions on Friday, 1 November 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 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 Sunshine 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 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	224,452	257,372
Average enrolment per division	22,445	25,737
Average enrolment (+10%) per division	24,690	28,311
Average enrolment (-10%) per division	20,201	23,163

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 Sunshine Coast 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 Sunshine Coast Regional Council has 224,452 voters and is divided into 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 9 was out of quota and in 2024, Divisions 1, 4, 5 and 9 are projected to be out of quota, with Division 7 also close to lower limit of the quota.

Table 2 – Summary of Enrolment for the Existing Divisions				
Division	Enrolment as at 31/01/2019	(%) Deviation from Average Enrolment	Projected Enrolment as at 31/03/2024	(%) Deviation from Projected Average Enrolment
Division 1	24,154	7.61	34,805	35.23
Division 2	21,073	-6.11	24,869	-3.37
Division 3	23,760	5.86	26,367	2.45
Division 4	20,774	-7.45	22,718	-11.73
Division 5	20,873	-7	22,565	-12.33
Division 6	21,968	-2.13	23,925	-7.04
Division 7	21,555	-3.97	23,281	-9.54
Division 8	22,482	0.16	24,569	-4.54
Division 9	25,183	12.2	29,024	12.77
Division 10	22,630	0.82	25,249	-1.9

Public Suggestions

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

Suggestions were invited from 27 April 2019 to 5pm 20 May 2019. The Change Commission received 8 submissions which are available to view at Appendix C.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council recommended several adjustments to Divisions 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9. The Change Commission incorporated many of these suggestions in its proposal, as well as additional modifications to further balance enrolment and accommodate other public submissions.

The Councillor for Division 3 proposed adding the Kawana Forest section of Meridan Plains to Division 3 and transferring Battery Hill into Division 2. The Change Commission implemented both suggestions with some additional modifications. It proposed that the entire locality of Meridan Plains be united in Division 3, thereby allowing the boundary between

Divisions 3 and 6 to follow locality boundaries. In addition to uniting the suburb of Battery Hill within Division 2, the Change Commission proposed extending the northern boundary of Division 2 to the Currimundi Creek, creating an easily identifiable northern boundary.

The remaining submitters expressed a variety of opinions regarding the boundaries of Divisions 4, 8 and 9. The Change Commission accommodated as many of these as possible and noted that in doing so, it was not able to fully implement each recommendation.

The Coolum Residents Association Inc. and Development Watch Inc. advised of a lack of connection between Bli Bli and Coolum Beach and recommended excising Bli Bli from Division 9, utilising the Maroochy River as a boundary. Both suggestions noted the rural residents in Division 9 have long used Coolum Beach as their district centre, while Bli Bli is linked more closely with Nambour. The submitters noted areas such as Yaroomba and part of Mount Coolum should be moved into Division 9. A third submitter also noted that if changes must occur to Division 9, that these should occur around Bli Bli.

The Change Commission implemented the suggestions about Bli Bli and proposed transferring the area south of the Maroochy River into Division 10, while proposing other changes along the coastal strip between Divisions 4, 8 and 9 to accommodate other submitters' recommendations.

Two submitters recommended the strip of coastal communities currently in Division 9 be included within Division 8, and that most of the area south of the Maroochy River be excised to Divisions 4 and 7. The Change Commission partially adopted these submissions, uniting more of Coolum Beach and the entire Yaroomba and Point Arkwright localities within Division 8 and transferring the part of Maroochy River situated north of Aerodrome Road into Division 4. The Change Commission found the proposed boundaries better balanced enrolment while enabling the transfer of Bli Bli out of Division 9.

A couple submissions raised matters that were outside the scope of this review. One requested the Coolum Beach locality be transferred to the Noosa Shire Council, while the other recommended an external boundary review to address the Lake Weyba catchment being divided across two local governments (Noosa and the Sunshine Coast). The Change Commission cannot consider transferring parts of one council to a neighbouring council unless an external boundary review is referred to it. The Ministerial referral for this review is to balance enrolment within the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's internal divisions. Therefore, both requests were not able to be actioned.

Proposed Determination

The Change Commission published its proposal on 25 September 2019 and invited public comments. Advertisements were placed in The Courier-Mail, the Sunshine Coast Daily and on the ECQ's social media channels.

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 25 September 2019 to 5pm on 11 October 2019. The Change Commission received 112 comments which are available to view at Appendix D.

Five comments expressed support for the proposed boundaries, approving of changes to Divisions 4, 9 and 10, the proposed transfer of the Kawana Forest area from Division 1 into Division 3 and one submitter stated the boundaries are a fair and reasonable solution to the region's growth.

More than 100 submissions expressed opposition to the proposed changes and some of the main objections included:

- splitting the Currimundi suburb and lake catchment area between Divisions 2 and 3;
- separating the Dulong and Kureelpa communities into separate divisions;
- the boundaries and composition of Divisions 5, 9 and 10; and
- the size of the proposed Division 5 and subsequent representation concerns.

More than half of the comments opposed the proposed transfer of part of Currimundi and the lake catchment area into Division 2. The submitters cited their concerns about the area not being effectively managed if split across two divisions, noting that Currimundi is aligned with the low-density character of Division 3 and has shared interests with this Division. Many requested the boundary be placed at Buderim Street so that Currimundi remains united in Division 3. A number of comments also objected to the proposed inclusion of Caloundra West in Division 3, with a couple recommending the southern boundary return to follow Sugar Bag Road and one advising that residents are more aligned with Division 2 due to its high-density buildings, tourism and shared use of beaches, shopping, and entertainment facilities.

The Change Commission was persuaded to implement the submitters' recommendations, so that the northern boundary of Division 2 follows Buderim Street and keeps Currimundi united within Division 3. To accommodate this change and the other submissions, the Change Commission has also returned the portions of Caloundra West and Little Mountain to Division 2, bounded by Sugar Bag Road and Caloundra Road.

Many of the other submissions raised opposition to proposed changes in the northern half of the Council area, and particularly Divisions 5, 9 and 10. To accommodate this feedback, the Change Commission has been persuaded to realign the boundaries of these Divisions to be closer to the existing boundaries rather than those that were proposed.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council and Division 9 Councillor recommended Bli Bli remain in Division 9, stating that the area shares community interests as evidenced by government projects and historical connections. As the removal of Bli Bli from Division 9 precipitated a large degree of change in Divisions 5 and 10, which have been opposed by several public submitters, the Change Commission was persuaded to return Bli Bli to Division 9. In doing so, it is noted that Division 9's enrolment remains stable and the Change Commission was able to address submitter concerns regarding the proposed Divisions 5 and 10.

A number of submitters requested Dulong and Kureelipa remain united within the same division as they have shared history and amenities, with some recommending both suburbs be transferred into Division 5. The Change Commission notes that currently Kureelipa and part of Dulong are in Division 10, with a portion of Dulong also located in Division 5. As the final boundaries have largely returned Division 10 to its existing location, the Change Commission supported the unification of these two suburbs by transferring the remaining piece of Dulong into Division 10.

Several comments objected to the size of the proposed Division 5 and raised representation concerns, with some recommending that two councillors continue to represent the Blackall Range and hinterland area. The comments noted that the councillor for the proposed Division 5 would spend significantly more time commuting between communities when compared to the other councillors and that this would have ramifications for the community. The Change Commission sought to accommodate these submissions by realigning the northern boundary of Division 5 so that it is in a similar location to the existing boundary. It has however chosen to follow suburb boundaries, rather than return to the existing boundary which splits suburbs. This boundary also accommodates other submitters' concerns regarding the proposed placement of Obi Obi and Mapleton in Division 5, with the final boundaries uniting them entirely within Division 10. The Change Commission notes that under the current boundaries, Division 5 is the second largest division in terms of land area and that this remains the case for the final boundaries.

A couple submitters recommended the Rosemount community west of the Bruce Highway remain in Division 10, with one noting it has a strong connection with Nambour. The proposed boundary had sought to unite the entire suburb in Division 7, however based on the public feedback, the Change Commission was persuaded to return the boundary to follow the Bruce Highway. The Change Commission has united the entire portion of Rosemount that is situated west of the Bruce Highway in Division 10, noting the current boundary splits this locality between Divisions 5 and 10.

The Division 1 Councillor recommended fewer changes be implemented for this Division and requested Meridan Plains and Crohamhurst be retained in Division 1. The Change Commission was unable to accommodate this suggestion, noting significant changes are required to address enrolment in Division 1, given it is currently projected to be 35.23% above the quota by 2024.

Some of the comments raised matters that fell outside the scope of this internal boundary review and were unable to be considered by the Change Commission. A couple comments requested changes to the external boundary between the Noosa Shire Council and Sunshine Coast Regional Council, while a third comment questioned why an additional division had not been created to contain the population growth. The referral for this review is to balance enrolment in the existing divisions of the Council and the Change Commission cannot recommend adding divisions or transferring areas between Councils unless a change proposal is referred to it by the Minister.

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 2, 3, 5, 7, 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.

Divisions 2 & 3

Two changes have been made to accommodate feedback from the comments on the proposal. The proposed transfer of part of Currimundi from Division 3 into Division 2 has been reversed, thereby retaining Currimundi and the lake catchment in Division 3. The northern boundary of Division 2 follows Nicklin Way and the Battery Hill suburb boundary along Buderim Street.

In actioning the above change, it was necessary for Division 2 to regain its existing portions of Caloundra West and Little Mountain, with the south-western boundary following Nicklin Way, Sugar Bag Road, Caloundra Road and Pelican Waters Boulevard.

Division 5

The Change Commission has reversed many of the proposed changes in the north of the Council area between Divisions 5, 9 and 10. Rather than return the northern boundary of Division 5 to its existing location, the Change Commission has chosen to follow locality boundaries so that entire suburbs are united in either Division 5 or 10. In doing so, the Change Commission has also sought to accommodate public submissions regarding shared community interests by retaining areas such as Dulong and Kureelipa in the same division. The northern boundary of Division 5 now follows the Conondale, Cambrook, Curramore, Witta, Montville, Flaxton, Hunchy, West Woombye, and Woombye locality boundaries.

Division 7

A single change to the proposed Division 7 boundary has been implemented, reinstating the north-western boundary so that it follows the Bruce Highway. The proposal had united Rosemount in Division 7, however to accommodate public submissions this change has been reversed. In transferring the portion of Rosemount that is situated west of the Bruce Highway, the Change Commission determined to unite all of this portion of Rosemount in Division 10, noting that the current boundary splits the area between Divisions 5 and 10.

Division 9

Division 9 has mostly returned to follow the existing boundaries, regaining Bli Bli and its portions of the surrounding suburbs of Parklands, Maroochy River, Maroola and Pacific Paradise. The Change Commission retained the changes it had proposed between Divisions 8 and 9 in the Yaroomba, Point Arkwright and Coolum Beach areas, noting the final boundaries bring Division 9's enrolment into quota at 1.17%.

Division 10

The boundaries of Division 10 have mostly returned to their existing location. The existing boundary between Divisions 9 and 10 has been retained, while the existing boundary between Divisions 5 and 10 has been realigned to follow suburb boundaries. The portion of Rosemount west of the Bruce Highway has also been returned to Division 10, with an additional portion that is currently situated in Division 5 also being placed in Division 10.

The southern boundary of Division 10 now follows the Kenilworth, Kidaman Creek, Obi Obi, Mapleton, Dulong, Town Mountain, Coes Creek, Nambour and Rosemount locality boundaries.

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 modifications to Divisions 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10 become the final divisions for the Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

The Change Commission is satisfied that the final boundaries meet the enrolment requirements of the Act, while also balancing the expressed needs and interests 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 Projected Average Enrolment
Division 1	20,296	-9.58	28,162	9.42
Division 2	22,547	0.45	26,351	2.38
Division 3	22,770	1.45	25,265	-1.83
Division 4	22,924	2.13	25,244	-1.92
Division 5	23,219	3.45	24,985	-2.92
Division 6	20,769	-7.47	25,176	-2.18
Division 7	23,165	3.21	25,059	-2.64
Division 8	23,309	3.85	25,340	-1.54
Division 9	22,708	1.17	26,425	2.67
Division 10	22,745	1.34	25,365	-1.45

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 Sunshine Coast Regional Council be redivided into 10 divisions as shown in the maps contained 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
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