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Subject: (58077) Ipswich City Council - electoral arrangements review - George Edward Hatchman
Attachments: Submission-to-the-ICC-Electoral-Change-Review-26th-Nov-2022.gh.pdf

Online submission for **Ipswich City Council - electoral arrangements review** from **George Edward Hatchman**

Submission Details

Name: George Edward Hatchman

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Submission text:

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26th November 2022

George Hatchman

[REDACTED]

Willowbank Q 4306 (ICC Div.1)

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Submission to Ipswich City Council Electoral Arrangement Review

Introduction:

I am a resident of the Ipswich Suburb of Willowbank which is included in the current Ipswich City Council electoral Division 1 ward (ICC Div.1) and forward this submission in response to the Change Commission's promoted interest in hearing community views on all aspects of the current ICC Divisional arrangements, ref >[Ipswich City Council - electoral arrangements review | Electoral Commission of Queensland \(ecq.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/electoral-arrangements-review) .

My background is that until recently, I was the elected President (20+ years) of the Willowbank Area Residents Group Inc. which is a residents action group that acts to advocate for the 'wellness & advancement' of the social & environmental amenity of Willowbank & surrounding communities of Amberley, Jeebropilly & Ebenezer and have subsequently developed a good understanding of the social and general demographic characteristics of this area within the ICC.

Considerations:

'Community of Interests' – In 2019 Willowbank was incorporated into the current ICC Div.1 ward to balance rural with urban communities and resulting in a divisional ward of an area of 612km², being 55% of the total ICC boundaries and in excess of 60km from this ward's east to west extremities .

From inception, this revised ICC divisional arrangement had compromised the intent of the QLD Local Government Regulation 2012 *'to provide that the external boundaries of a local government area should be drawn in a way which has regard to communities of interest'*!

In this respect, the amalgamation of the current ICC Div.1 of the ICC suburbs of Mount Mort & Grandchester to the west with the distant suburbs of Redbank & Swanbank to the east, has not proved to be a synergy of *'common community interest'* , as in reality, **ICC Div.1 incorporates no less than 5 separate Post Code areas; 4301, 4304, 4305, 4306 & 4340**, and with each post code area having their separate social & commercial/urban/rural identities, this has hardly contributed to *'a common community of interest'* across the broader area of the ICC Div.1 ward! No other ICC ward (& probably no other LGA in QLD) would have this multiple Post Code community diversity!

Indeed, by this very process in attempting to balance out rural vs urban representation, it has effectively created a voting 'gerrymander' to bias highly populated urban interest's dominant over the lower density rural interests and ensure voting outcomes that would almost certainly result in elected councillors being both from the urban suburbs and not having an active understanding of their rural constituents issues, particularly given the geographical distance to daily encounter remote from ICC office in CBD Ipswich.

Also a paradox of this arrangement is the case of our suburb of Willowbank, originally having our local Post Office at Amberley (Post Code 4306), however, now with the incorporation of the Amberley Post Office into the security of RAAAF Base Amberley, it's access is now closed to the public and our community's mail services have been re-allocated to the Ipswich West Post Office (Post Code 4305), a location which is essentially outside the ICC Div.1 boundary. This hardly consolidates a *'communities of interest'* philosophy?

Representation – With the initial election of 2 councillors to each ICC Division, the councillors of Div.1 jointly teamed to provide representative services to the vast reaches of the Div.1 ward. However, over the intervening years, our community has observed that the two councillors have divided their representative interests with each being more selective by focusing on either the east or west sections of Div.1.

From this observation, one has no other option than to assume that each councillor has realised that the scope of the numerous individual communities in Div.1 is too comprehensive for both to duplicate their interests and have found it more efficient to split their representative responsibilities in effort to better understand the communities in which they have focused on to advance the interest of these communities to the parent administration of the ICC.

This consideration alone certainly benchmarks the need to at least divide ICC Div.1 into two separate wards!

Visibility – from the commencement of the current four (4) separate Divisions of the ICC in 2019 with all eight (8) councillors being co-located in ICC Administration offices at CBD central Ipswich, the wider community has seemed to have lost their personal contact with their individual divisional councillors, specifically with the divisional offices that had previously existed within the divisions being closed. These ‘on site’ offices enabled the councillors to be visible to the general electorate community and more reachable to constituents in seeking services. Engagement with CBD traffic, parking, security access & distance from ward, especially from Div.1 west communities, are intimidating limiters to seeking representative services and also prevails to limit recognition of the divisional councillor’s activity & identity. This certainly does not enhance the effective representation profile of the incumbent elected councillors!

Recommendations:

In conclusion to my preceding comments, my recommendation modelled on my ICC Div.1 observations, would be in line with the ICC submission of October 2022 to increase the number of ICC Divisions to incorporate 10 individual wards (each with an individual councillor) so that they are unique to their social & urban/rural/industrial demographics to effectively ‘*unite suburbs and their communities of interest within individual Divisions*’ and re-establish Divisional offices within the these 10 wards to enhance the councillor’s effective representation of community issues.

I would specifically recommend that the Change Commission considers the unique social & environmental characteristics & corresponding demographics of ICC rural communities and accordingly incorporate these communities into individual ICC identified rural wards.

Regards,



George Hatchman