



LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHANGE COMMISSION

REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

BUNDABERG REGIONAL COUNCIL

FINAL DETERMINATION

JUNE 2015

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Summary recommendation

The *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)* (the Act) provides for a Local Government Change Commission (the Change Commission) to conduct assessments of proposed changes to electoral arrangements for local government and internal and external boundary changes.

The Change Commission has conducted an independent review of whether the Bundaberg Regional Council's electoral arrangements should be changed from a divided to an undivided structure. Following its assessment, the Commission is not persuaded that the proposal should be implemented.

In order to endorse a variation to a Council's electoral arrangements, the Change Commission generally looks for evidence that:

- the proposed new system would be more workable in practice than the existing one; and/or
- there is demonstrated community support for the proposed change.

No practical issues have been identified with the existing divided arrangement. With regard to community views the Change Commission has been unable to confirm a sufficiently strong body of opinion in favour of a move away from the status quo. Accordingly, the Change Commission has recommended to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade that the current divided system be retained.

Terms of reference

On 2 April 2015 reference was made to the Change Commission by the Hon Jackie Trad MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade for review of the electoral arrangements for the Bundaberg Regional Council.

The proposal for consideration was to change from a divided council of 10 councillors to an undivided council of the same number of councillors.

Legislative provisions

The reference was issued pursuant to Part 3, Division 1 of the Act.

Pursuant to section 17 of the Act, the types of references that may be considered by the Change Commission include a change of:

- the boundaries of a local government area;
- the internal divisions;
- the number of councillors;
- the name of a local government area; or
- the classification of a local council (for example, from a town to a city).

The process for considering a proposed local government change is:

- *Referral* – a local council writes to the Minister requesting a change to its electoral arrangements or the Minister of her own accord forms the view that such a change is warranted, and in either case the Minister then refers the matter to the Change Commission for consideration. It is open to the Minister to provide directions as to

how particular assessments should proceed (e.g. that the Commission conduct a public meeting in the local government area).

- *Assessment* – the Change Commission conducts an independent assessment of whether the proposed change is consistent with the Act and in the public interest.
- *Recommendation* – the Commission lets the Minister and the public know the results of its assessment (the findings must be published in a newspaper circulating generally in the local government area, in the Government Gazette and on the Electoral Commission’s website). The Commission’s final recommendation is not subject to appeal.
- *Implementation* – if the Change Commission ultimately recommends adoption of a particular proposal, the Governor in Council may implement the change under a regulation.

The review process

On 19 February 2015 the Bundaberg Regional Council wrote to Stephen Johnston, Acting Director-General, Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience requesting a change to its electoral arrangements by moving from a divided council of 10 councillors to an undivided council with the same number of councillors. On 2 April 2015 the Minister in turn referred the proposal to the Change Commission for assessment. Copies of relevant correspondence are at Appendix A.

The Change Commission is made up of the Electoral Commissioner or a combination of the Electoral Commissioner, the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and a casual commissioner.

The Change Commission for this review is made up of:

- Mr Walter van der Merwe, Electoral Commissioner; and
- Mr Gregory Rowe, casual Commissioner (appointed on 13 November 2015 for three years by Governor in Council).

When the matter was referred, the Minister provided no directions as to how the assessment should be conducted. However, to gauge public sentiment, the Change Commission elected to conduct public hearings as well as provide members of the public with the opportunity to make submissions in writing or online.

The Change Commission held two public meetings in Bundaberg on 12 May 2015. A total of 40 persons and four councillors attended the hearings, with all in attendance given the opportunity to address the meeting. Members of the public were also invited to lodge submissions with the Commission. Copies of relevant advertisements may be found at Appendix B. The Commission established a special section on the Electoral Commission of Queensland website to facilitate the lodgement of submissions. Copies of submissions received are at Appendix C.

The Change Commission received 25 submissions in favour of abolishing divisions and 681 submissions in favour of maintaining divisions.

In addition there were petitions from three organisations, one for abolishing divisions and two for maintaining divisions. Overwhelmingly those respondents to the petitions that are on the electoral roll within the Bundaberg Regional Council area favoured maintaining divisions with some 646 electors preferring to maintain the status quo.

Under the Act the Change Commission is afforded a high degree of discretion as to how to undertake its assessment. Noting the diverse nature of the Bundaberg Regional Council and

the divergent views being expressed, the Change Commission contracted the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland to undertake an independent random survey of community members using a statistically relevant sample. The objective was to estimate the proportion of adults who support a change in the electoral arrangements of their local council area. A total of 400 residents from the Bundaberg Regional Council area were surveyed. The survey found 51.3% of residents within the Bundaberg Regional Council area favoured abolishing divisions and 32% favoured maintaining divisions, with a confidence interval of 95% (i.e. margin of error of +/- 5%). The full results and report of the survey commissioned by the Change Commission are published herewith at Appendix D.

Further copies of this report can be downloaded from the Electoral Commission of Queensland website www.ecq.qld.gov.au

CHAPTER 2 ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is that the Bundaberg Regional Council move from divided to undivided status. The Change Commission is required to decide whether this proposal is consistent with the *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)* and whether implementation would be in the public interest.

In conducting its assessment the Change Commission has had recourse to certain 'local government principles' set out in section 4 of the *Local Government 2009*, namely:

- sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services;
- democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement;
- good governance of, and by, Local Government; and
- ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and Local Government employees.

The Change Commission formed the view that the principles most relevant to this type of assessment were good governance and democratic representation.

Arguments in favour of a divided system typically include that:

- divisions allow a specific councillor to be a point of contact for electors in a particular locality;
- councillors know their local areas;
- divisions are a risk because of what happened in 2012 (Bundaberg Regional Council had 4 uncontested divisions), but without them the regional areas will not have representation;
- divisions lead to better service to electors than no divisions, as without divisions you cannot hold councillors accountable. There is perception that there is a lack of accountability in an undivided system as councillors tend to 'pass the buck' when difficult issues are raised with them;
- the size of the council area makes it very difficult for one person to get across the whole area (e.g. history of roads, zoning, flooding, etc);
- a by-election for a councillor need only be held in the division where the vacancy occurs instead of involving the entire council electorate; and
- in undivided systems electors may not know who to contact about a local government problem.

Proponents of undivided systems, on the other hand, argue that:

- uncontested divisions are not a truly democratic process (there were four uncontested divisions in Bundaberg Regional Councils elections of 2012);
- all electors get to vote for all candidates, so the community as a whole has a greater say in who runs their local government - currently there are nine councillors that some electors feel they have no control over;
- divisions can foster parochialism, whereas councillors should be required to decide the issues before them in accordance with the interests of the entire community; and
- the quality of those contesting council elections may be higher in an undivided system because electors are able to choose from amongst the best candidates across the entire region.

The conclusion reached by the Change Commission, in light of the above, was that both divided and undivided systems have their individual merits. This view is supported by the

range of different electoral systems, in Australia and around the world, that are considered to be legitimate and fundamentally democratic by the particular communities they serve.

Having concluded that neither system was inherently better than the other, the Change Commission then considered the principle of democratic representation and, applying that principle, sought to ascertain whether the majority of Bundaberg Region electors favoured one particular arrangement over another.

It was not practicable for the Change Commission to conduct a plebiscite across the entire local government area, and in any event the Change Commission has no legislative authority to compel all electors to participate. Noting this, the Change Commission conducted a survey of a random sample of electors in the region.

Interpreting the results of that survey has not been a clear cut exercise. On the one hand out of 400 electors surveyed 51.3% supported a change to an undivided electoral arrangement. On the other hand the Commission must take into account the known potential for error in any sampling process (and cannot make any assumptions about undecided responses). Applying a +/- 5% margin for error as advised by the independent consultants, the Change Commission has concluded from its survey that as many as 56% but also as few as 46% of electors might be in favour of a change to undivided status.

When combined with the vast majority of submissions received, and the petitions tabled, which were strongly supportive of the status quo, the Commission has not been persuaded that a strong enough case can be made out for changing to an undivided system.

In summary, the Act does not set out any precise criteria that the Change Commission should apply in assessing whether a given proposal is in the public interest. The Commission might be swayed to support change where it can clearly be demonstrated that the system proposed would be more workable in practice and therefore more conducive to good government, than the current one. As indicated above, however, both systems have their respective merits.

In the context of democratic representation, the Commission would also give serious consideration to any proposal that demonstrates it has the support of a clear majority of electors. For the reasons outlined above, the Commission cannot be so satisfied.

Accordingly, the Commission has determined against recommending any change to the existing electoral arrangements for the Bundaberg Regional Council.

Recommendation

The Change Commission's final recommendation to the Governor in Council is as follows.

That for future local government elections the Bundaberg Regional Council continues to be divided into 10 electoral divisions.

The Commission notes that not all the current divisions are within quota and that adjustment to the electoral boundaries will be required in readiness for the 2016 quadrennial elections.

Noting this, the Change Commission has now commenced the process of realigning the internal boundaries for the Bundaberg Regional Council to ensure all divisions contains a reasonable proportion of electors, as defined by section 15 of the Act. Further public consultation on the proposed boundary changes will take place as part of this process.

Acknowledgements

The Change Commission wishes to express its gratitude to the organisations and individuals that provided submissions, suggestions and commentary on this process. The Commissioners would also like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the staff of the Electoral Commission of Queensland, extends their thanks the Department of Treasury and Trade for the population projection figures and to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines for its assistance in preparing maps of the electoral boundaries.

Walter van der Merwe and Gregory Rowe
Change Commission

APPENDIX A

**Council's letter
Minister's referrals**



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BUNDABERG QLD 4670
T 1300 883 699 F 07 4150 5410
E ceo@bundaberg.qld.gov.au
W bundaberg.qld.gov.au
ABN 72 427 835 198



19 February 2015

Stephen Johnston
Acting Director-General
Department of Local Government, Community Recovery & Resilience
PO Box 15009
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Steve

Re: Electoral Arrangements (Your Ref: DGBN15/69)

I refer to correspondence from the Acting Director-General, Stephen Johnston dated 6 February 2015 regarding preparation for the 2016 quadrennial election. This correspondence states that Council's current internal boundaries, namely Divisions 4 and 5 are out of quota.

In accordance with Section 16 for the Local Government Act 2009 and on the basis of the data supplied by your Department and the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ), Council hereby makes application for a review of its internal boundaries.

On the wider question of the electoral arrangements that should be in place for the 2016 election, I advise Council has been actively reviewing and assessing the suitability and appropriateness of the current arrangements.

As you may be aware, the current electoral arrangements are a divided Council with 10 Councillors and the Mayor elected in the 10 divisions across the area. Both the 2008 and 2012 elections were conducted with attendance voting.

At its meeting held 17 December 2014, Council resolved to make application for the following arrangements to apply for the conduct of the 2016 poll:

- i. That the ECQ be appointed as the Returning Officer for the conduct of the poll.
- ii. That the 2016 election be conducted by way of a postal ballot for the entire region.
- iii. That Council request a change to its arrangements by abolishing the election of Councillors by Divisions.



Council considers there is a public benefit in postal ballots and having non-divided arrangements. Postal ballots are considered less resource intensive and consequently are considered less a financial impost on Council and its ratepayers. Council anecdotal evidence supports the view that residents favour this form of voting and Council notes there has been an increasing State trend to pre-poll and postal voting.

It would appear logical that with technological advancements and connectivity the functionality of postal voting will increase markedly. It is also salutary to note that the demographics of Council's regional area is a high percentage of 60+ aged residents. At the 2011 Census, the electorate of Bundaberg had 27.3% of its population aged 60+ and Burnett 26.1%. This compared with a statewide 18.7%. It may be reasonable to conclude that an ageing population favours the flexibility afforded by postal voting.

Council considers that demographic change, community expectation and technological developments advance the view that postal voting is an appropriate arrangement for its 2016 quadrennial election.

Regarding the application to go undivided, Council generally notes the following factors in favour of this arrangement:

- Divisions can foster parochialism, whereas Councillors should be required to decide the issues before them in accordance with the interest of the entire community.
- Because all electors get to vote for all candidates, the community as a whole has a greater say in who runs their local government.
- The quality of Councillors in an undivided system may be higher because electors are able to choose from amongst the best candidates across the entire region.
- Minority groups have a better chance of being represented in an undivided system.
- Councillors are accountable to the entire electorate, not just electors in a particular locality.
- An additional argument may be that due to quota issues, divisions can become large in geographic areas and lead to a heavier workload for some Councillors.
- Some divisions may be uncontested (as occurred in 2012) and this can foster the view that electors are not given an adequate choice and anecdotal feedback to Council was that electors feel disenfranchised in this circumstance.

It is also worth noting that non-divisional representation obviates the need to consider internal boundary quotas prior to an election. The ongoing notification of internal boundaries leads to elector confusion as to what division they reside and who their representative is. This issue is exacerbated with many electors already uncertain of their division / electorate across Federal, State and Local Government elections and frustrated with continual amendment.

Obviously demographics impact electoral boundaries but Council holds the view this can be mitigated at a local government level by a non-divided electoral arrangement.

Should you have any enquiries in relation to this matter please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christopher Joosen', written over a horizontal line.

Christopher Joosen
Governance Manager

File Ref: (CJ:AC) GV/0022



Hon Jackie Trad MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure,
Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade

Our ref: MBN15/49

- 2 APR 2015

Mr Walter van der Merwe
Electoral Commissioner
Electoral Commission Queensland
GPO Box 1393
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Mr van der Merwe

I am writing to you in relation to local government electoral reviews which have been undertaken in preparation for the 2016 local government elections.

I have recently received proposals from 14 local governments seeking a review of their existing electoral arrangements.

The proposals include submissions in relation to the internal divisional boundary distributions where it has been determined that the divisional boundaries are out-of-quota. In addition, four of those local governments have submitted additional proposals for voluntary changes to their existing arrangements.

I note that, under section 19 of *the Local Government Act 2009* (the Act), the Commission must consider whether the local government change is consistent with the Act and must consider my views on any proposed changes.

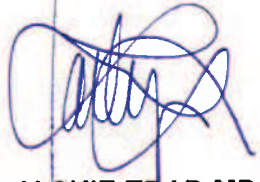
Having examined each of their proposals, I consider it appropriate to refer each matter to you for independent assessment and determination by the Local Government Change Commission.

For your reference, I have enclosed a summary of each divided local government's quota review, a copy of each proposal referred to you for review and additional supporting information to assist with your review.

Level 12 Executive Building
100 George Street Brisbane
PO Box 15009 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7100
Email deputy.premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

If you require any further information, please contact Mr Max Barrie, Director, Program Implementation and Review on (07) 3452 6704 or max.barrie@dlgcr.qld.gov.au, who will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely



JACKIE TRAD MP
DEPUTY PREMIER
Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure,
Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade

Enc (15)

DIVIDED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS – QUOTAS AND PROPOSED VOLUNTARY CHANGES

<u>Local Government</u>	<u>Results of Review</u>	<u>No. of Divisions Out of Quota</u>	<u>Referral to Local Government Change Commission</u>
Banana Shire Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer quota review
Bundaberg Regional Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quota review • proposal to abolish divisions • proposal to incorporate unallocated area into local government area
Cairns Regional Council	Out-of-quota	1	Refer quota review
Cassowary Coast Regional Council	In quota	0	No referral required
Fraser Coast Regional Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer quota review
Gold Coast City Council	In quota	0	No referral required
Gympie Regional Council	In quota	0	No referral required
Ipswich City Council	Out-of-quota	5	Refer quota review
Isaac Regional Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer quota review
Logan City Council	Out-of-quota	1	Refer quota review
Moreton Bay Regional Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer quota review
North Burnett Regional Council	In quota	0	No referral required
Redland City Council	Out-of-quota	1 (out) and 1 (predicted)	Refer both quota reviews
Rockhampton Regional Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quota review • proposal to renumber divisions
Scenic Rim Regional Council	Out-of-quota	1 (out) and 1 (predicted)	Refer both quota reviews
South Burnett Regional Council	In quota	0	No referral required
Sunshine Coast Regional Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer quota review
Tablelands Regional Council	Out-of-quota	3	Internal boundary review plus additional voluntary change proposal to increase councillor numbers already referred to Change Commission on 16 December 2014.
Townsville City Council	Out-of-quota	2	Refer quota review
Whitsunday Regional Council	Out-of-quota	1	Refer quota review



Deputy Premier
Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure,
Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade

Our ref: MC15/2677

Your ref: 10.4 Petitions

18 JUN 2015

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Corner Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Level 12 Executive Building
100 George Street
PO Box 15009 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7100
Email deputy.premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie *Neil,*

Thank you for your letter of 21 May 2015 about Petition Nos. 2354-15 and 2391-15 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly concerning the proposal from the Bundaberg Regional Council (the Council) to abolish its electoral divisions for the 2016 quadrennial local government elections.

Under the *Local Government Act 2009*, any changes to local government electoral arrangements, including the abolition of electoral divisions, must be referred to the independent Local Government Change Commission (Change Commission) for review.

On 19 February 2015, the Council applied to the Government to abolish its electoral divisions for the 2016 quadrennial local government elections.

On 2 April 2015, I referred the Council's proposal to change its electoral divisions to the Change Commission for independent review.

The Change Commission is currently reviewing the Council's proposal and has undertaken consultation with the community involving:

- calling for written submissions by the public
- convening a public hearing
- conducting a telephone poll.

The Change Commission will consider all submissions received when deciding whether the proposal to abolish the Council's electoral divisions is in the public interest. The petitioners are afforded ample opportunity through the Change Commission's process to have their views considered.

The Government will consider any recommendations of the Change Commission before deciding whether it is necessary to recommend implementing a change to the Council's electoral arrangements to the Governor in Council for implementation by Regulation.

Yours sincerely

JACKIE TRAD MP
DEPUTY PREMIER
Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure,
Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade

APPENDIX B

Advertisements

QUEENSLAND CHANGE COMMISSION BUNDABERG REGIONAL COUNCIL

REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ARRANGMENTS

The Bundaberg Regional Council has requested a voluntary change to its electoral arrangements by abolishing the election of councillors by division in favour of election across the whole council area. The Minister responsible for Local Government has in turn referred the matter to the Change Commission for independent assessment.

The Commission invites written submissions from interested persons and bodies relating to the council's electoral arrangements, to be lodged on or before **5.00 pm Friday 22 May 2015**.

A public meeting to assist with public input for this assessment is to be held as follows:-

DATE & TIME OF HEARINGS **Tuesday 12 May 2015 at 2.00pm and 6.00pm**
PLACE OF HEARING **School of Arts
Room 2R
184 Bourbong Street
Bundaberg Qld**

Submissions should be marked BUNDABERG REGIONAL and may be lodged:

- by posting to
Change Commissioner, Local Government Change Commission
GPO Box 1393, BRISBANE, QLD 4001
- by personal delivery, between the hours of 9.00 am and 5.00 pm to
Electoral Commission of Queensland, Level 6, Forestry House, 160 Mary Street, Brisbane
- by email to bundabergregionalcouncilreview@ecq.qld.gov.au or
- online form

For any assistance related to the review matter please refer to the Commission's website, or by contacting the Commission on 1300 881 665 for assistance.

If you wish to lodge a submission, please note that all submissions will be published in their entirety (including name and address details) on the Commission's website.

Walter van der Merwe
Change Commissioner
Electoral Commission of Queensland

Blaaze065827

065827
M4x3_124hx129w
Brisbane Courier Mail
Bundaberg News Mail

APPENDIX D

**Statistical analysis of the Bundaberg local
government authority survey**



Statistical Analysis of the Bundaberg Local Government Authority Survey



**PREPARED FOR:
ELECTORAL COMMISSION QUEENSLAND**

**The University of Queensland
Institute for Social Science Research
ABN: 63942 912 684**

June 2015

ISSR

Institute for Social Science Research

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BUNDABERG LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY SURVEY

File Name: ISSR061140 ECQ Bundaberg Report.docx
Authors: Michele Haynes, Martin O’Flaherty, Tania Walker, Joe Byrne
Project team members: Michele Haynes, Martin O’Flaherty, Tania Walker, Joe Byrne
Name of Project: ECQ Arrangement Survey Bundaberg
Document Status: FINAL Analysis Report

The University of Queensland ABN: 63942 912 684

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Executive Summary

The Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ) provides advice to the Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government, and Planning about Local Government Council boundaries including whether Local Government councils that are divided into a number of seats/wards/electorates should be combined into undivided councils with multiple councillors. Councils can ask for their status to be reviewed by ECQ and the Minister can also direct ECQ to undertake a review of specific councils. This report is intended to inform a review of the Bundaberg LGA electoral arrangements.

In May-June 2015, ISSR conducted an independent random telephone survey of residents in the Bundaberg Local Government Authority (LGA), which is under review for a change from a divided to an undivided structure. The objective was to estimate the proportion of adults who support a change in the electoral arrangements of their local council area.

A total of 400 residents from the Bundaberg LGA were surveyed. Fifty-one percent of respondents were in favour of the proposed change from a divided to undivided council, with a 95% confidence interval of 46.3-56.1%. Thirty-two percent were opposed (95% CI: 27.6-36.8%), and 16.8% (95% CI: 13.4-20.8%) were unsure.

1. Background

The Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ) provides advice to the Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government, and Planning about Local Government Council boundaries – in particular, whether Local Government councils that are divided into a number of seats/wards/electorates should be combined into undivided councils with multiple councillors. Councils can ask for their status to be reviewed by ECQ and the Minister can also direct ECQ to undertake a review of specific councils.

The Bundaberg Local Government Authority (LGA) is involved in a review of its status, and is considering a change from a divided to an undivided council.

2. Objective

To estimate the proportion of resident adults who support a change in the electoral arrangements of the Bundaberg local council area.

3. Methodology

The survey was conducted using computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) and random digit dialling (RDD) to generate telephone numbers within a council area. To achieve stratification by age and gender it was necessary to sample telephone numbers randomly by quotas for age and gender categories. This means that telephone numbers were called by the interviewer and the age and gender of the participant was recorded. When the sample size or 'quota' of responses was achieved for a particular age and gender category, then enough people had been interviewed to ensure sufficient representation from this group of people, and no further interviews were completed with respondents from that age/gender category. The interviewer was prompted to then make further random calls until the quotas were reached for the remaining age and gender categories. This resulted in a more representative sample that achieved the required degree of accuracy in the estimated proportion of adults who support a change in the division of their local government council area.

Random stratification using quotas such as this is a well-established method of conducting telephone surveys and ensures that a population is well represented by gender and age groups. This is particularly important for telephone surveys where experience and research shows that participation in a survey is more likely to occur among particular demographic groups. Stratification is required to ensure that people of all gender and age groups are well represented in the survey.

3.1 Sample Source

A commercial sample provider (Sampleworx) was used to supply the sample for this project. Sampleworx randomly generates numbers and then verifies their status. These numbers do not come from any pre-existing list. The numbers are validated every six months to ensure sample pool quality.

Using a Google maps overlay, Sampleworx can provide a calculated estimation of *Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)* districts and zones, respective post codes and Local Government Authorities (LGA's). This level of profiling is quite accurate but not guaranteed, for example, they allocate a number to the LGA that covers the greatest percentage of an Exchange Service Area (ESA).

While the profiling of RDD numbers to LGA is not an exact match, given the nature of the LGA involved it is likely to still represent a very robust sample frame. In regional areas, the number of exchanges is limited in comparison to metropolitan areas and in many cases the ESA falls completely within the boundaries of the LGA.

There are two elements to the methodology:

- (1) Random Generation of numbers within ACMA issued prefixes and then profiling into ACMA charging districts, zones and exchange boundaries that allows them to determine the most likely LGA's. A number is then profiled to the LGA that covers the majority of its exchange area.
- (2) The second part of the process is to wash the numbers to verify which numbers are currently valid. This is done by 'pinging' the number at the exchange to determine if it is in fact a real number. This does not mean that it is actually connected to a house but does reduce the proportion of dead numbers normally associated with the traditional RDD sample.

This methodology of random generation means that there is a greater coverage of numbers. Numbers are not limited to only those numbers that are published in a pre-existing list. They are constantly generating new numbers and verifying them, including those in new exchange areas and VOIP numbers. Every existing number in the database is re-verified in a six month cycle, to identify its current status.

For the purpose of this project all valid numbers from the ACMA Bundaberg district were included in the pool of numbers for sampling. Respondents were also asked to provide their suburb to confirm their eligibility (as a resident of the Bundaberg LGA), and those contacted who did not live in a selected LGA were terminated as out of scope.

3.2 Sample Size

To determine the proportion of adults who would support a change in the division of their local council area, it is important to obtain a sample size that is large enough to ensure that the required degree of accuracy is obtained and that the proportion is estimated to a high level of confidence.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 Census of Population and Housing were used to estimate the population of adult residents in the Bundaberg council area (aged 18 and over) in 2011 to be 63,259. In 2015, the population size is approximately 66,000 (based on communication with the Electoral Commission Queensland). The formula used for calculating the minimum sample required to achieve an estimate of the proportion (p), within a range of $d = 0.05$ from the exact value for the population of size N (council area), with a 95% level of confidence ($z = 1.96$) and assuming a maximum amount of variance (associated with $p = 0.5$) is:

$$n = N \left[1 + \frac{(N-1)}{0.25} \left(\frac{d}{z} \right)^2 \right]^{-1} .$$

Table 1, below, highlights the required sample sizes for sampling populations of sizes ranging from 50 to 275,000 to obtain the estimate of a proportion with a +/-5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level. Based on calculations from the formula above, Table 1 shows that the minimum required sample size approaches 384 as the size of the population being surveyed approaches 275,000. A sample size of 400 was chosen for this survey to ensure that an accurate estimate would be obtained to the required precision for a population of size 66,000.

Table 1. Minimum sample size required to achieve specified accuracy and precision in an estimated proportion, from corresponding population sizes

Population Size	Sample Size	Population Size	Sample Size
50	44	2,500	333
100	108	5,000	357
150	132	7,000	364
200	152	10,000	370
500	217	50,000	381
750	254	100,000	383
1,000	278	275,000	384

The sample was also divided into quotas, proportionally by age and sex categories, to ensure that the results were representative of the Bundaberg local government area. The final quota sizes are shown in Table 2 below. These quota sizes were developed using proportional allocation by age and gender based on population estimates from the ABS data for the Bundaberg LGA (cat. no. 3235.0), according to the 2013 edition of the Australian Statistically Geography Standard (ASGS).

Table 2: Final sample quotas by sex and age

Sex/Age	18–50	Over 50	Total Adult Persons
Females:	97	110	207
Males:	87	106	193
Total:	184	216	400

4. Data and Results

A change from a divided to undivided council is under review for the Bundaberg LGA. In order to assess public support for this potential change, members of the sample were asked the following question:

I'd like to present you with some information, and then ask your opinion about a proposed change being considered for your Local Government Council.

*There are two different ways Councils in Queensland are arranged. Your type of council is called a **divided council**. This means that the council area is divided up, and voters in each division get to elect a single councillor.*

*Alternatively, in **undivided councils**, voters across the whole council area get to vote for all councillors.*

*There is a proposal being considered to change your council from being a **divided council** to an **undivided council**.*

Based on what I've described to you, do you agree with this change?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

As described above, the approach to sampling was designed to reflect the distribution of younger (aged 18-50 years) and older (aged 50 or more years) residents of both sexes as closely as possible, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' most recent population estimates.

Table 3 presents the sample percentages of respondents agreeing with and opposed to the proposed change, split by age and sex. Overall, just over half of the sample (51.3%) agreed with the proposed change, while 32% were opposed. Sixty-seven respondents (16.8%) offered no opinion. These results suggest that there is likely more support than opposition for the proposed change, as the 95% confidence intervals for the 'Yes' and 'No' responses do not overlap.

There are no apparent differences in support for the change by sex, as a χ^2 test ($\chi^2(2) = 1.24, p = 0.54$) failed to achieve significance. A significant χ^2 result was however obtained for age group ($\chi^2(2) = 6.3, p = .04$), with respondents in the 18-50 age group less likely to oppose the proposed change and more likely to select 'Don't know' than those aged 51 or older.

Table32: Estimates of agreement with change from divided to undivided council

			'Yes'		'No'		'Don't know'	
			Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI
Bundaberg	Male	18-50	52.9%	42.3-63.2%	28.7%	20.2-39.2%	18.4%	11.5-28.0%
			<i>46</i>		<i>25</i>		<i>16</i>	
		51+	49.1%	39.6-58.6%	38.7%	29.8-48.3%	12.3%	7.2-20.1%
			<i>52</i>		<i>41</i>		<i>13</i>	
	Female	18-50	52.6%	42.6-62.4%	24.7%	17.1-34.4%	22.7%	15.4-32.1%
			<i>51</i>		<i>24</i>		<i>22</i>	
	51+	50.9%	41.6-60.2%	34.5%	26.2-44.0%	14.5%	9.1-22.5%	
		<i>56</i>		<i>38</i>		<i>16</i>		
Total			51.3%	46.3-56.1%	32.0%	27.6-36.8%	16.8%	13.4-20.8%
			<i>205</i>		<i>128</i>		<i>67</i>	

95% CI: 95% Confidence interval

Appendix A – Survey/Questionnaire

Good Morning / Afternoon / Evening, my name is _____ and I am calling from the University of Queensland, on behalf of the Electoral Commission of Queensland. We are conducting a short phone survey in order to seek feedback regarding your Local Government electoral arrangements, for the Bundaberg Regional Council.

May I please speak to the person in your household, aged over 18 years of age, who most recently had their birthday? **[REINTRODUCE IF NECESSARY]**

The survey will take approximately two minutes of your time, and just so you know, this call may be monitored for quality assurance purposes.

Are you happy to get started?

[SINGLE RESPONSE][DO NOT READ OUT]

CN Yes, continue with interview	
AH Definite Appointment	→ CB
AS Unspecified Appointment	→ CB
HR Gatekeeper refusal	→ END
KR Known respondent refusal	→ END
UI Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	→ END
NE No eligible respondent	→ END
UN Respondent never available	→ END
LH Household-level language problem	→ END
LG Respondent language problem	→ END
BN Non-residential	→ END
DU Duplicate case	→ END
CU Respondent will contact us	→ END

Can you please tell me the name of your suburb?

[SINGLE RESPONSE][DO NOT READ OUT]

[LIST OF LOCALITIES PROVIDED – IF NOT FROM PROVIDED LIST SCREEN-OUT]

DK Don't know	→ INT
RF Refused to answer	→ INT

Q1

Record sex:

Interviewer note: *If necessary, ask:*

“For statistical purposes, can you please just state whether you are male or female?”

[SINGLE RESPONSE] [DO NOT READ OUT]

01 Male
02 Female

Q2

Which of the following age groups do you belong to?

[SINGLE RESPONSE] [READ OUT]

01 Under 18 – Do not read out → INT98

02 18-50

03 Over 50

04 Declined to answer – Do not read out → INT97

Q3

Divided to Undivided Structure

I'd like to present you with some information, and then ask your opinion about a proposed change being considered for your Local Government Council.

There are two different ways Councils in Queensland are arranged. Your type of council is called a **divided council**. This means that the council area is divided up, and voters in each division get to elect a single councillor.

Alternatively, in **undivided councils**, voters across the whole council area get to vote for all councillors.

There is a proposal being considered to change your council from being a **divided council** to an **undivided council**.

Based on what I've described to you, do you agree with this change?

[SINGLE RESPONSE][READ OUT]

01 Yes

02 No

03 Don't know

CONCLUSION

Your input is invaluable to us and on behalf of the Electoral Commission Queensland we would like to thank you for your time. If you would like to make any further comments or would like additional information about any matters covered in this survey please visit the Electoral Commission of Queensland's website at www.ecq.qld.gov.au and follow the links to Local Government Reviews.