

COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATION MODELS

Local governments can be either Undivided (Non-Divisional) ie representing the whole council area, or divided into single or multi-member 'Divisions'.

The recent amalgamation of Councils has resulted in many Councils covering a much larger geographical area. Currently, 22 local governments in Queensland are divided. These local governments range in size from 4 Councillors to 14 Councillors. The remaining 51 are undivided.

"Historically there has been a move away from divided Local Governments in Queensland, in 1988 82% of Councils were divided, however by 1995 this reduced to 55%, and at the 2008 elections only 29% were divided."

Council is seeking community feedback in particular—

Whether the Community of the Fraser Coast Local Government Area should be represented by divisions with single or multi-member Councillors or remain undivided with Councillor representation for the area as a whole?

Fraser Coast Regional Council currently has Non-Divisional Representation. The table below summaries the variances between the representation models:

	Non-Divisional Representation "UNDIVIDED"	Divisional Representation "DIVIDED"
Councillors	Mayor + 10 Councillors	Mayor + 10 Councillors
Council Election Area	Undivided or Non-Divisional	Divided (with either single member or multi member divisions)
Councillor Representation	Elected to represent the whole area	Single member divisions are where there is only one (1) Councillor representative per division Multi member divisions are where there is more than one (1) Councillor representative per division
Total Electors	64,801	64,801
Reasonable proportion of electors per division	Quotas not required	Quotas required ie Total electors/No. Councillors plus or minus 10% eg between 5,832 and 7,125 electors required per division
Voting System	First past the post	Single Member - Optional Preferential Multi Member – First past the post
Elector Voting	electors can vote for any candidates and at any polling booth across the entire area	electors can only vote for candidates within the division the elector is enrolled and at polling booths in the division
Candidate Nominations	candidates stand for whole of area election	a person cannot stand as a candidate in more than one division
Candidate residence	candidate must reside and be enrolled in the local government area	candidate does not have to reside in the division but must reside and be enrolled in the local government area

Non-Divisional Representation	Divisional Representation
ADVANTAGES	
<p>One Vote One Value - Ensures the fundamental democratic principle of one vote one value and is the optimum form of democracy in that—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> all candidates present themselves to all the electors for election; and an elector may choose their preferred representatives from the total list of candidates rather than only those candidates within their division. 	<p>Community Affiliation - Most candidates generally have a close relationship with the divisional area because they are a resident, conduct a business or are involved in groups or activities in the area and are frequently personally known to the electors. However, it is not necessary for a Divisional Councillor to live in their division.</p>
<p>Equal representation No Quotas - There is no requirement for quotas as all Councillors represent the total electors ensuring fair and adequate representation without the need to achieve divisional quotas.</p>	<p>Election Costs - the costs of running a campaign in a divisional election are likely to be less than for an area wide election which may encourage more candidates to stand for divisional elections than an area wide election.</p>
<p>Single community of interest - encompassing the economic, residential, recreational and social interests of the council area as a whole.</p>	<p>Local Representation - Divisions are seen to guarantee direct representation of all areas and communities within the Council area. Electors of a division may feel more able to identify with a Councillor elected from their division as their particular local representative.</p>
<p>Unbiased - The structure does not favour any interest group or geographic location with Councillors making decisions with the best interests of the council area in mind and are not influenced by parochial divisional attitudes</p>	<p>Local Interests - The community feels that they have a direct representative who will take care of local interests and/or issues which may be overlooked in the larger "council-wide" picture.</p>
<p>Communication - The lines of communication between members of the community and Council are enhanced, and are not affected by the perception that matters must only be presented to the relevant divisional councillor(s).</p>	<p>Communication - Divisions provide clear and identifiable lines of communication with Council through Divisional Councillors.</p>
<p>No boundaries - "Communities of interest" are not affected or divided by arbitrary divisional boundaries. The most supported candidates will be elected, rather than candidates who may be favoured due to peculiarities of the division eg elected unopposed or having attracted less votes than defeated candidates from other divisions.</p>	
<p>Representation - Smaller community candidates are afforded an opportunity to be represented on Council, if they are able to get sufficient support regardless of quotas.</p>	
DISADVANTAGES	
<p>Size of region - The size of the Council area can make it difficult for councillors to service the whole electorate.</p>	<p>Expectations of Individuality - Community expectation or perception that Divisions will mean "individuality" ie not only having their own Councillor but individual budget allocations and funding will be provided for their division; that the rates raised in the division will be quarantined and spent only in the division; that divisional rating structures will be implemented and policies will be divisional.</p>
<p>Communication and access - between councillors and community members may be diminished, with community confusion on what councillor they should raise an issue with and a perceived lack of direct representation for their area.</p>	<p>Dissent and disconnect - in the community favouring divisional progress over what is in the interest of the community as a whole.</p>
<p>Candidate cost of running - Potential candidates may be discouraged by the size of the electorate and cost of running for election.</p>	<p>Quotas and communities of interest - The greater the number of divisions the more difficult it becomes to identify suitable boundaries: maintain communities of interest and comply with quota limits.</p>
<p>Cost of by-elections - The cost of by-elections in area wide elections can be costly, if an office becomes vacant and requires filling by election.</p>	<p>Workloads – to meet quota provisions, divisions can become large and therefore the workload of single member divisions can be extremely demanding and absenteeism would leave the division without direct representation.</p>
<p>Less local community affiliation - Concern that "whole of area" elections may result in Councillors with less affiliation and empathy with communities within the Council area.</p>	<p>Perceived imbalanced representation - There is the need to ensure the achievement of divisional quotas resulting in more divisions in heavily populated centres and less divisions in large unpopulated areas giving the perception of imbalanced representation.</p>

Options for Divisional Council

It is recognised that there are many options for division configurations and the number of Councillors representatives. The option contained within this paper is initial concepts only and is presented as a starting point for discussion and does not represent any preferred position.

Map 1 - Proposed Divisional Boundaries – Single Member Divisions



