

ORDINARY MEETING 3 DECEMBER 2014	5.1
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REVIEW OF CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL

Darryl Crees: General Manager Corporate Services #434365

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- **Advises the Hon David Crisafulli MP, Minister for Local Government Community, Recovery and Resilience that Council has resolved to remain an undivided local government and to retain 5 elected representatives; and**
- **Notes the Electoral Commissioner will be advised that the Chief Executive Officer will not be undertaking the role of Returning Officer for the 2016 quadrennial local government elections.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has been invited to review current electoral arrangements, being the level of elected representation and the undivided local government status in Douglas, in the lead up to the 2016 quadrennial local government elections. For the reasons outlined in this report it is recommended that Council retain the "status quo" of 5 elected representatives and an undivided local government.

Also included in the report, for noting by Council, is that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be advising the Electoral Commissioner of her decision not to undertake the role of Returning Officer for the next local government election.

BACKGROUND:

Correspondence has been received from Hon David Crisafulli MP, Minister for Local Government Community, Recovery and Resilience, advising that on 27 August 2014, Parliament passed the *Local Government Legislation Amendment Act 2014* which amended the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*.

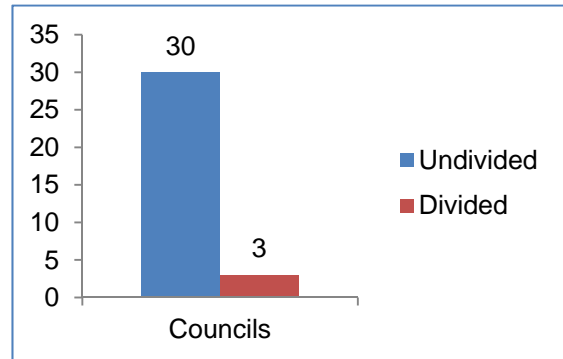
Council is invited to review current electoral arrangements in preparation for the 2016 quadrennial local government elections. Possible changes include the number of Councillors that represent the Douglas Shire and moving from an undivided shire to electoral divisions. Any changes must be submitted to the Minister by 1 March 2015.

Additionally another change that will take effect once the amendments to the Act are proclaimed is that the CEO will be the returning officer for the 2016 local government elections unless the CEO advises the Electoral Commissioner by 1 July 2015 that he or she will not be undertaking the role.

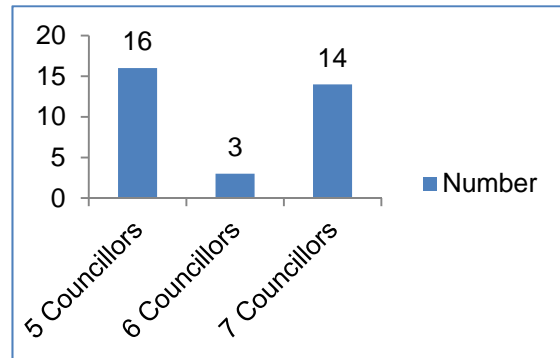
COMMENT:

Douglas Shire Council is one of 33 Category 3 Councils in Queensland and a full list of these councils is included as an attachment to this report. Some pertinent statistics from this list are:

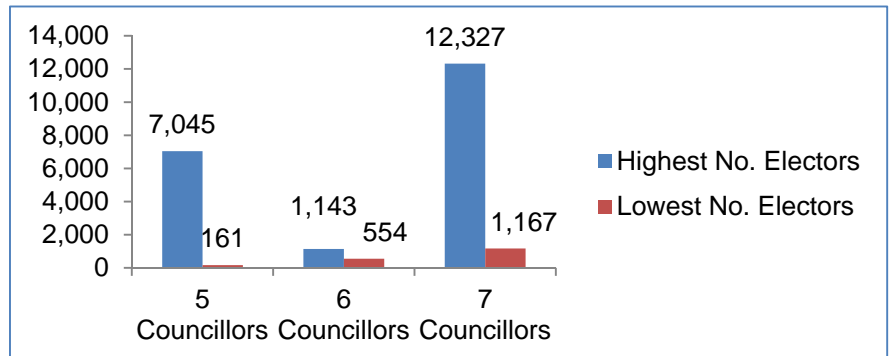
The number of electors in councils range from 161 (Diamantina Shire Council) to 12,327 (Mareeba Shire Council). Douglas has 7,045 electors and has the seventh highest number of electors of the 33 councils.



The minimum number of Councillors is 5 and the maximum is 7 (number of Councillors is inclusive of the Mayor). The number of electors per Councillor range from 32 to 1,761. In Douglas the ratio is 1,409 electors per Councillor which is the third highest of the category 3 councils.



Due to the diverse number of electors in Category 3 councils providing average number of electors is not meaningful therefore the highest and lowest have been depicted in the graph.

**PROPOSAL:**

There are two options that require Council consideration, to move from an undivided local government to having electoral divisions and the number of elected representatives required at Douglas Shire Council. Whilst this is a policy decision of Council the following comments have been provided to support the recommendation.

The vast majority of councils included in the Category 3 band have an undivided local government area. The absence of divisions empowers the electors to vote for their preferred candidates from the candidate pool for the whole local government area. The introduction of divisions will restrict the electors choice to the candidates nominated for the division in which the elector is registered to vote.

Electoral divisions can also have the potential or perception that the elected representatives are voting on Council matters on the basis of how the decision will affect their division and not considering the benefit for the whole local government area. Remaining undivided ensures that decision making of all elected representatives is objective based on their knowledge of aspirations and requirements of Shire's constituency.

Feedback received indicates that the community is satisfied with the level of representation provided by the current number of Councillors and the manner in which the democratic process of local government is being exercised. The organisational structure, based on lean management principles, has been designed to support 5 elected representatives and any increase in this number has the potential to impact on available resources.

Although a Council decision is not required on the CEO's determination regarding the role of Returning Officer for the 2016 quadrennial local government elections it has been included in this report for noting. After due consideration the CEO has decided not to undertake the role of Returning Officer due mainly to:

- Having a Returning Officer who is external to the local government, where the elections are occurring, ensures independence and objectivity of the process being undertaken.
- The Queensland Electoral Office has access to individuals who are experienced and well versed in undertaking the role of Returning Officer and other roles required.
- There is considerable work required by the CEO and Council Staff to successfully run an election and to outsource this work will enable the CEO and staff to focus on core duties of Council administration and operation.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE:

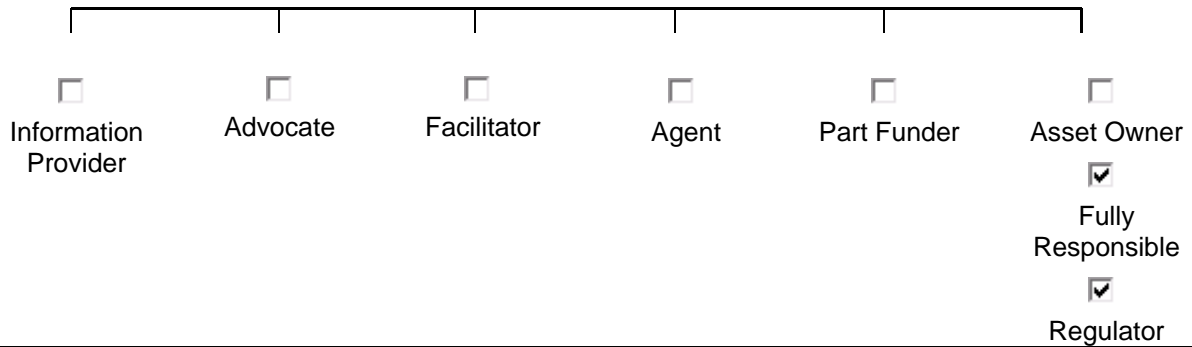
This report has been prepared in accordance with the Corporate Plan 2014 – 2019:

5.2.1 – Provide Councillors and community with accurate, unbiased and factual reporting to enable accountable and transparent decision-making.

COUNCIL'S ROLE:

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:



Fully Responsible: Funding the full cost of a program or activity.

Regulator: Meeting the responsibilities associated with regulating activities through legislation or local law.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Increasing the number of Councillors will have an impact on operational budgets due to additional remuneration, associated expenses and potential increase on resources.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

Maintaining current level of elected representation and the undivided status of local government, which to date has worked well based on Council's progress and community feedback, will mitigate risks associated with reputational image and organisational sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

ECONOMIC: Nil

ENVIRONMENTAL: Nil

SOCIAL: Introducing divisions has the potential for Councillors, when making decisions, to consider their division only rather than the whole local government area.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

This proposal will fall within the "inform" category of Council's Community Engagement Framework.

ATTACHMENTS:

List of Category 3 Councils in Queensland.

ATTACHMENT – LIST OF CATEGORY 3 COUNCILS IN QUEENSLAND

Council Name	No. Divisions	No. Councillors	No. Electors	No. of Electors per Councillor
Diamantina Shire Council	1	5	161	32
Croydon Shire Council	1	5	199	40
Burke Shire Council	1	5	231	46
Bulloo Shire Council	1	5	234	47
Barcoo Shire Council	1	5	235	47
Boulia Shire Council	1	5	283	57
McKinlay Shire Council	1	5	552	110
Richmond Shire Council	1	6	554	92
Etheridge Shire Council	1	5	584	117
Mornington Shire Council	1	5	587	117
Quilpie Shire Council	1	5	649	130
Aurukun Shire Council	1	5	756	151
Winton Shire Council	1	6	907	151
Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council	5	6	1143	191
Carpentaria Shire Council	1	7	1167	167
Flinders Shire Council	1	7	1231	176
Paroo Shire Council	1	5	1268	254
Cloncurry Shire Council	1	5	1565	313
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council	1	7	1585	226
Torres Shire Council	1	5	1658	332
Cook Shire Council	1	7	2060	294
Barcaldine Shire Council	1	7	2224	318
Longreach Shire Council	1	7	2608	373
Murweh Shire Council	1	5	2970	594
Balonne Shire Council	1	7	2992	427
Goondiwindi Regional Council	1	7	6968	995
Douglas Shire Council	1	5	7045	1409
North Burnett Regional Council	6	7	7051	1007
Charters Towers Regional Council	1	7	7505	1072
Hinchinbrook Shire Council	1	7	8289	1184
Banana Shire Council	6	7	9340	1334
Burdekin Shire Council	1	7	11930	1704
Mareeba Shire Council	1	7	12327	1761