

**BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL  
2019 REDISTRIBUTION  
ASSESSMENT OF ALP PROPOSALS AND CHANGES TO PREFERENTIAL  
VOTING SYSTEM**

**25 July 2019**

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**Introduction**

Reviews of the boundaries of the Brisbane City Council (BCC) are governed by Chapter 3, Part 4 of the *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (ss 16-23)

On 20 March 2019 the Electoral Commission Queensland applied for approval for the Change Commission to commence a review of the boundaries of the council's 26 wards.

This followed advice from the BCC of the latest enrolment figures across the 26 wards (at 31 January 2019).

Submissions were sought on the review and a number of interested parties, including the Australian Labor Party (ALP), put forward proposals relating to the entire city or more limited parts of it. A number of submissions related to matters not within the Change Commission's responsibilities.

**Enrolments**

As at 31 January 2019 the average enrolment was 29,699 with the 10 percent deviation from the average enrolment extending from 26,729 enrolled voters to 32,668 enrolled voters.

Table 1: Ward Enrolments at 31 January 2019

Ward	Enrolment	Deviation from Average (%)
Bracken Ridge	29,482	-0.73
Calamvale	28,721	-3.29
Central	32,852	10.62
Chandler	26,712	-10.06
Coorparoo	30,293	2.0
Deagon	29,373	-1.1
Doboy	29,107	-1.99
Enoggera	31,068	4.61
Forest Lake	30,465	2.58
Hamilton	30,644	3.18
Holland Park	28,117	-5.33
Jamboree	27,427	-7.65
McDowall	30,281	1.96
Macgregor	27,156	-8.56
Marchant	31,029	4.48
Moorooka	28,966	-2.47
Morningside	31,199	5.05
Northgate	31,974	7.66
Paddington	30,613	3.08
Pullenvale	29,468	-0.78
Runcorn	26,862	-9.55
Tennyson	28,776	-3.11

The Gabba	33,363	12.34
The Gap	29,754	0.19
Walter Taylor	29,262	-1.47
Wynnum Manly	29,198	-1.69

Three wards are out of quota:

- Central, 184 voters or 0.62 percent above permitted variation;
- Chandler, 17 voters or 0.06 percent below permitted variation; and
- The Gabba, 695 voters or 2.34 percent above permitted variation.

Across Brisbane's 26 wards enrolments exceed the permitted variation from the quota by a mere 896 voters – a miniscule percentage of the approximately 772,000 enrolled voters.

It should be recalled that a significant redrawing of all 26 wards was undertaken by ECQ before the 2016 BCC election. The fact that current enrolments fall significantly within quota points to the success of that redistribution.

### **ALP Submission**

The ALP made a submission to the Commission arguing in favour of significant changes to the vast majority of wards. No changes were suggested to four wards only – Calamvale, Holland Park, Northgate and Wynnum Manly.

The ALP submission contains major shortcomings. These include:

- Suggesting changes to 22 of the 26 wards when only three are out of quota
- There is no guarantee the suggested changes will inoculate against another major redistribution being required before the 2014 election – resulting in three significant redistributions within eight years
- These major suggested changes will guarantee there will be maximum disruption to existing boundaries and electors across the affected wards
- The proposal is entirely disproportionate to the shortcomings sought to be overcome
- The proposals include anomalies with little or no explanation –
  - the splitting of the suburb of Woolloongabba between three wards – The Gabba, Coorparoo and Morningside
  - substantial change in the location and character of the existing ward of Paddington resulting in a ward extending from Wilston to Auchenflower
  - moving the suburb of Richlands into the Centenary suburbs-based ward of Jindalee thus severing it from the suburbs of Inala and Durack with which it has a strong connection.

The major criticism of the ALP proposal is the fact that, in an effort to resolve a relatively minor problem, they have embraced a wholesale revision of the city's boundaries with little regard for the disruption this will cause.

### **Impact of ALP Proposals**

The shortcomings of the ALP's proposals highlighted above are aggravated by a distinctly political perspective which seeks to accommodate Labor's attempted return to power.

Three facts should be noted from the outset:

- firstly, the sheer weight of the LNP's victory in 2016, where they outpolled Labor by 49.9 percent to 33.2 percent – or by one and one half times, makes it extremely difficult for Labor to gain a significant advantage from simply changing boundaries;
- secondly, any observations about the relative strengths of the two major parties must be made in the context of the reintroduction of compulsory preferential voting as has been proposed by the state ALP Government; and
- any observations about possible results are made in the knowledge that they are based on the same preference distribution as occurred in 2016 which is unlikely to be replicated in 2020, particularly with the reintroduction of compulsory preferential voting.

On existing results, and taking Labor's proposals into account, one marginal LNP ward is made extremely marginal – the LNP lead in Doboy is reduced from 4.4 percent to 1.0 percent simply through a change in boundaries. Without any increase in votes Labor is seeking to capture Doboy with limited additional effort.

Amongst other LNP wards which are regarded as marginal minor changes in the LNP's lead would follow if Labor's boundary suggestions were followed. These are:

- Runcorn (LNP margin reduced by 1.7 percent)
- Paddington (LNP margin reduced by 0.1 percent)
- The Gap (LNP margin reduced by 0.2 percent)
- Enoggera (LNP margin reduced by 0.6 percent)

While these are relatively minor changes, a change to compulsory preferential voting would imperil any ward in which the LNP fell short of 50 percent of first preference votes. This observation is based on the fact that Labor would be the overwhelming beneficiary of Green preferences and, conversely, the Greens would be the beneficiary where they outpolled the ALP.

This scenario is discussed below.

Those wards (with LNP first preferences indicated) which could be vulnerable under this scenario are:

- Holland Park (49.5 percent)
- Enoggera (49.3 percent)
- Paddington (48.9 percent against Greens)
- Northgate (46.7 percent)
- Coorparoo (46.4 percent)
- Doboy (45.9 percent)

Of the current five ALP wards only one, Deagon, would see any meaningful reduction in their winning margin (down from 3.9 percent to 3.1 percent). However, given the circumstances of the 2016 election it is difficult to imagine this change having any realistic impact on the 2020 result.

## Compulsory Preferential Voting

In line with the recommendations of the Fitzgerald Committee of Inquiry, Local Government Areas, with single member constituencies, which includes Brisbane, currently use optional preferential voting. The state government is planning to change this.

The effect will be to reduce the majority of the LNP in the Brisbane City Council. The likely effect of compulsory preferential voting can be modelled by distributing the preference of the exhausted first preference votes for candidates who polled 3<sup>rd</sup> or lower on the ballot in proportion to those that did not exhaust.

This has the effect of increasing the ALP vote by 2.07%.

There are 19 wards where the ALP and the LNP finish first and second, which are the ones directly affected. They are listed in the table below. As a result of the change to Compulsory Preferential, Coorparoo and Northgate would become Labor wards.

Ward	Current LNP 2PP	Swing caused by CP	LNP Margin after CP
Chandler	74.64%	-1.90%	72.74%
Jamboree	69.09%	-2.12%	66.97%
Hamilton	67.64%	-3.35%	64.29%
McDowall	65.20%	-2.11%	63.09%
Calamvale	64.74%	-2.28%	62.46%
Macgregor	63.72%	-2.36%	61.36%
Bracken Ridge	60.58%	-1.33%	59.25%
Marchant	58.27%	-1.94%	56.33%
Runcorn	57.97%	-1.68%	56.29%
Central	58.21%	-3.75%	54.46%
The Gap	55.66%	-2.17%	53.49%
Doboy	54.28%	-1.57%	52.71%
Enoggera	54.76%	-2.77%	51.99%
Coorparoo	52.96%	-3.37%	49.59%
Northgate	51.71%	-2.29%	49.42%
Deagon	46.25%	-1.82%	44.43%
Forest Lake	44.69%	-0.75%	43.94%
Morningside	43.45%	-1.18%	42.27%
Wynnum_Manly	38.44%	-0.57%	37.87%

### Combination of Labor redistribution and compulsory preferential without any change of votes

As per the table below, were the ALP redistribution submission to be accepted, Doboy would also change hands, without a single voter changing their mind.

Ward	Current LNP 2PP	Swing caused by CP	ALP Redistribution Proposal	Combined effect	Adjusted LNP margin
Chandler	74.64%	-1.90%	-2.20%	-4.10%	70.54%
Jamboree	69.09%	-2.12%	-1.90%	-4.02%	65.07%
Hamilton	67.64%	-3.35%	1.40%	-1.95%	65.69%

McDowall	65.20%	-2.11%	1.10%	-1.01%	64.19%
Calamvale	64.74%	-2.28%	0.00%	-2.28%	62.46%
Macgregor	63.72%	-2.36%	0.70%	-1.66%	62.06%
Bracken Ridge	60.58%	-1.33%	-0.70%	-2.03%	58.55%
Marchant	58.27%	-1.94%	0.10%	-1.84%	56.43%
Runcorn	57.97%	-1.68%	-1.70%	-3.38%	54.59%
Central	58.21%	-3.75%	-0.10%	-3.85%	54.36%
The_Gap	55.66%	-2.17%	-0.20%	-2.37%	53.29%
<b>Doboy</b>	<b>54.28%</b>	<b>-1.57%</b>	<b>-3.40%</b>	<b>-4.97%</b>	<b>49.31%</b>
Enoggera	54.76%	-2.77%	-0.60%	-3.37%	51.39%
<b>Coorparoo</b>	<b>52.96%</b>	<b>-3.37%</b>	<b>0.20%</b>	<b>-3.17%</b>	<b>49.79%</b>
<b>Northgate</b>	<b>51.71%</b>	<b>-2.29%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>-2.29%</b>	<b>49.42%</b>
Deagon	46.25%	-1.82%	-0.80%	-2.62%	43.63%
Forest Lake	44.69%	-0.75%	-0.50%	-1.25%	43.44%
Morningside	43.45%	-1.18%	-0.90%	-2.08%	41.37%
Wynnum_Manly	38.44%	-0.57%	0.00%	-0.57%	37.87%

### Effects of a uniform swing

The LNP in the Brisbane City Council received 60.56% of the two-party preferred vote. This is extraordinarily high, and unlikely to be repeated. Former Lord Mayor Graham Quirk received 59.51% of the two-party preferred vote.

The election of Lord Mayor is not affected by the redistribution, but is affected by the change from optional to compulsory preferential.

We have modelled the Lord Mayoral result and it would take a first preference swing of 7.30% (to two decimal places) with the swing falling 80% to Labor and 20% to others, to replace the lord mayor.

However, it would not take the same swing to win the council, despite the councillors' margins collectively being 1% overall higher.

If all its proposed changes are implemented the Labor Party could gain the following results with the following first preference swings.

With a 3.52% first preference swing Labor would win 6 extra seats:

- The Gap
- Holland
- Park
- Enoggera
- Coorparoo
- Northgate
- Doboy

The Greens would win one:

- Paddington

With support of the other Greens councillor for The Gabba, Jonathan Sri, and Independent Nicole Johnston, they would have the 14 seats needed to be able to control council.

To win they would need a swing of around 6% which would gain them two seats from the LNP:

Runcorn  
Central

And one from the Greens:

Paddington

Giving them 14 seats needed for control outright. The Liberals would still provide the mayor, as he would need a first preference swing of 7.3% against him, but he would face 16 hostile councillors in the chamber.

### **Conclusion**

By a combination of a change to the voting system and the expectation of an advantageous set of new boundaries the ALP is hoping to improve its chances of electoral success without the inconvenience of improving its vote.

One LNP ward – Dobby – would be in immediate danger of falling to the ALP under this combination of circumstances.

A further four key wards are made more marginal under Labor's proposed boundary changes while six LNP wards (including three of those already mentioned) would be at risk through the proposed change to the preferential voting system.

Attachment 4 indicates the methodology used to determine the wards expected to be under threat from these changing scenarios.

This pincer movement on marginal LNP wards is nothing more than a politically motivated assault which owes little to the broader interests of electors in the relevant wards. The widespread disruption which would accompany these changes would do little to instil confidence in the municipal electoral system but would add fuel to the notion that political parties are simply pursuing their own interests at the expense of the wider electorate.

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Attachments:

Attachment 1: Two Party Preferred Votes by Ward

Attachment 2: Security of Wards Table

Attachment 3: First Preference Votes by Ward

Attachment 4: Combined Impact of ALP boundary submission and introduction of compulsory preferential voting.