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Submission Topic: Electorate Boundaries
Electoral District: Hill; Hinchinbrook
Related Submissions: CCRC Submission

Submission:

Cassowary Coast Regional Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the QRC in response to the Discussion Paper (v1.7) concerning electoral boundary redistribution. We recognise the legal and democratic imperatives and consider physical geography, communities of interest, local government boundaries, travel and communication, regional identity, demographic trends.

As a Council in North Queensland, we are deeply concerned about proposals that would dilute the region's voice in State Parliament through reducing the number of electorates, or through boundary adjustments that disconnect communities or split Local Government Areas unduly.

Key Points / Position

Preserve the number of electorates in North Queensland

North Queensland currently has 11 State electorates. Any changes that reduce this number would reduce regional representation, further centralising political power in the southeast. We urge QRC *not* to abolish any North Queensland electorate without a clear and overwhelming justification, and with extensive local consultation.

Retain the electorate of Hill

The electorate of Hill should be preserved. While Hill is now about 4.7% above quota, projections indicate that by 2032 it will be about 0.41% *below* quota. This demonstrates that over time, growth (or lack thereof) will bring it within acceptable enrolment deviation without needing radical boundary changes. The temporary over-quota status is not sufficient reason to abolish the seat or to severely diminish its geographic or community coverage.

Adjust boundaries of Hill and Hinchinbrook south of Cardwell to align with Local Government Areas (LGAs)

To maintain coherent representation, we propose moving the Hill / Hinchinbrook boundary (south of Cardwell) in such a way that boundaries align more closely with LGAs. This reduces splitting of local government areas, helps with administration, fosters stronger democratic connection, and ensures that residents' concerns are more coherently represented.

Physical, geographic, and community of interest considerations

The geography of North Queensland coastlines, ranges, remoteness, transport links is starkly different to more compact urban areas. Changes should respect physical barriers (mountains, river catchments), natural travel corridors, coastal vs inland communities, and established community ties (including indigenous communities, regional service centres, towns). Large distances should be justified only by necessity.

Future-proofing: demographic & enrolment trends

While some electorates are currently out-of-quota, the law permits $\pm 10\%$ variation, and QRC must take into account future projections. Hill's forecast moving to slightly below quota shows that some over-quota seats may naturally fall back into compliance. Sudden, disruptive adjustments are not preferable when trends suggest more gradual balancing is possible.

Ensure local government boundaries are respected where feasible

Aligning State electoral boundaries with LGA boundaries helps in clarity for voters, administrators, service delivery, and political accountability. The Council supports boundary changes that maintain or improve alignment, especially in areas where current misalignment causes confusion or splits communities sharing services.

Queensland Police Service Boundaries

In addition to respecting local government boundaries and physical/geographic features, Cassowary Coast Regional Council urges the Commission to consider Queensland Police Service (QPS) district and divisional boundaries in its deliberations. This is more critical now with the QPS now taking a lead role in emergency management coordination across the state

Specific Recommendations

- Retain Hill as an electorate; do *not* abolish it.
- Redraw the boundary between Hill and Hinchinbrook south of Cardwell so that the boundary follows Local Government Area boundaries where possible. For instance, areas south of Cardwell that are part of a particular council (Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook, or whichever LGAs) should be entirely within one electorate rather than split.
- Any adjustments to quotas should be minimal, gradual, and consider population forecasts out to 2032 (as required by QRC's projections).

Why this matters

- North Queensland is geographically large, with dispersed populations. Diluting the number or strength of electorates weakens representation across the many regional issues: infrastructure (roads, ports), health services, education, environmental challenges (e.g. effects of climate on reef, rainforest), indigenous representation.
- Strong electorates that respect local identity help in accountability:

constituents know who their MP is; MPs are able to understand and respond to local needs.

- Aligning with LGAs supports more efficient public administration, less confusion for citizens, and more legitimacy in representation.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council urges the QRC to:

- Reject any proposal that reduces the number of North Queensland electorates.
- Retain Hill, making only those adjustments necessary to bring enrolment into quota bounds, especially via boundary shifts south of Cardwell aligning with LGAs.
- Ensure any boundary changes respect physical geography, communities of interest, and local government boundaries.

Thank you for considering this submission. We are available to provide maps, further local data, or to consult further.