

MEDIA RELEASE

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PREMIER ANNOUNCES SYSTEM FOR INTERNAL BOUNDARIES

Local governments will be able to conduct the 2008 elections on a divided or undivided basis, Premier Peter Beattie announced today.

Mr Beattie said State Cabinet had considered the issue this morning and decided that in line with local government wishes the need for internal divisions could be decided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the new Councils.

"The independent Commission recommended that all Councils, apart from the Torres Strait Islander Regional Council and the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council, should conduct their election on an undivided basis," Mr Beattie said.

"This makes sense because it will be difficult for to draw up new internal boundaries in time.

"However, since the report was released on Friday it has been also one of the major issues of concern raised with the Minister for Local Government and myself in discussions with Mayors.

"There are advantages and disadvantages in operating on an undivided basis.

"For example many Councils already operate on an undivided basis to emphasise the whole-of-area focus for all Councillors but in smaller towns or shires that are being amalgamated there is a concern that elections on an undivided basis will not give their local area an opportunity to be represented on a larger council.

"We have listened to these different views.

"Therefore we will be asking Councils which method - divided or undivided - will be the most functional and efficient system in their particular area."

Mr Fraser said he would be writing to all local governments today requesting their input into a new system of boundaries.

"We are asking Councils that are being amalgamated to get together and let us know what system best suits them," he said.

"It will be difficult to get any new internal boundaries in place before the election so Councils will only have until Friday to provide their comments.

"If current trends are any indication some Councils may prefer an undivided system. Since 1988 the number of undivided Councils has grown from 24 to 65."