

# Team Tyrell on top?



VISION ... the council would like to transform the mall from below to above

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## Your say about our council amalgamation

By JESSICA JOHNSTON

TOWNSVILLE residents remain dissatisfied with council amalgamation almost two years after the twin cities were joined, according to a *Townsville Bulletin* readers' survey.

An overwhelming 80 per cent of respondents, or 759 people, felt they were no better off since the amalgamation of the former cities of Townsville and Thuringowa, with just 20 per cent feeling it was beneficial.

Dissatisfaction at the amalgamation rose by 6 per cent on last year, when 26 per cent of respondents felt they were better off.

Support for Team Tyrell also dropped, with almost 39 per cent of respondents, or 380 people, saying they would change their vote based on the current council's performance, an increase of 9 per cent on last year.

However, 61 per cent or 603 people said even with hindsight, they would still have voted in Team Tyrell.

The increase in council rates by an average of 6.9 per cent this year remained as unpopular as ever, with just 23 per cent thinking the rise was justified.

Townsville City Council Mayor Les Tyrell admitted amalgamation was a difficult and long-winded process for any council.

“Amalgamation is a difficult process. We feel we are now starting to hit some home runs, but it's something that will take several years to settle down.

“When you amalgamate councils, absolutely everything we do is under review.

“We now have to work very hard to make it work as one entity.”

Cr Tyrell said he was not concerned about the dissatisfaction of some voters.

“People have every right to have their own viewpoint. It has been a very torrid

time, not just for our council, but for all amalgamated councils around the State.

“We certainly take on board what people's opinions are and can only work toward providing a better and more efficient service.”

Cr Tyrell defended the rates increase, saying it was essential to both improve services in the city and balance the ledger following amalgamation.

“The council has embarked on its largest capital works program in history — things need to be done including water and sewer upgrades, the Murray Stadium, the expansion of the Civic Theatre and the mall of course, which everyone agrees had to have something happen to it.

“The facts of the matter are that our costs continue to increase. We have a huge number of costs that have been forced upon us by amalgamation, and we will continue to have those costs for some time.

“When we took over the council there was a large deficit and we have to work to get the budget back in balance.”

The survey also found that 61 per cent of respondents, or 607 people, would like to see a return to a divisional council system.

Cr Tyrell said both systems had merits and the community would be consulted before council put its recommendation to the State Government over a preferred system before the 2011 elections.

A total of 95 per cent of respondents to the survey, or 937 people, live in the Townsville City Council boundaries.

Two per cent or 20 people voted from the Burdekin, and 10 people, or 1 per cent of the vote, came from each Hinchinbrook and Charters Towers.

## Pallarenda estate work set to begin this year

THE developer at the helm of a controversial residential estate at Cape Pallarenda says work will begin on the project this year.

Magnetic Horizons developer Laurence Lancini, who won approval for a 13-lot housing estate following a lengthy court battle, said he had ‘enormous’ interest from potential buyers since the project was given the green light in October.

Despite a vocal protest from some Pallarenda residents regarding the environmental sensitivity of the land, Mr Lancini said much of the interest to purchase on the Cape had come from within Pallarenda itself.

“There has been enormous interest, absolutely,” Mr Lancini said.

“It's amazing the amount of interest that has come from Pallarenda residents. It's a unique parcel of land and I think with Pallarenda, obviously there hasn't



Laurence Lancini

been any development there for a long time.” The Cape Pallarenda land parcel has been a point of contention for four years since the Federal Government controversially sold the land to Mr Lancini.

Townsville City Council knocked back the original 23

allotment plan, but agreed to the scaled-back, 13-house estate after an eight-month court battle.

Despite the development getting the nod, many respondents to a *Townsville Bulletin* readers' survey said they believed the site should remain free of housing.

A total of 35 per cent of respondents or 337 people said Cape Pallarenda should not be developed at all.

Another 20 per cent (193) of respondents said they agreed with the original proposal, while 21 per cent (207) agreed with the new 13 allotment.

A further 24 per cent (234) were undecided on the issue.

Respondents were split on whether the revised plan was a fair outcome with 38 per cent (364) voting it was and 37 per cent (360) saying it wasn't.

They were also divided as to whether environmental concerns had been given enough

consideration, with 40 per cent (384) saying they had, and 38 per cent (365) saying they hadn't.

Mr Lancini said the whole purpose of the development was to maintain the environmental sensitivity of the area.

“The application initially and even from the on-site presentation done at the early part of and prior to the application, we demonstrated to the community that our development had merits from an environment sustainability point of view.

“The application clearly stated that only a certain amount of vegetation could be removed, there would a lot of natural landscape.

“That was the whole intent of the development. Obviously, to construct the road and houses, some will have to be removed, that will be kept to a minimum.

“In my opinion, I think it's a good compromise.”

Mr Lancini said while the revised development had only been approved a few weeks ago, he expected work would begin on the site some time in 2010.

Opponent Frank Osborn said the council had displayed a ‘lack of vision’ for allowing the development.

Mr Osborn said he was not surprised at the early interest in purchasing a block.

“He's got 13 blocks, all with ocean views surrounded by environmental park, who wouldn't want to live there?”

Townsville City Council Planning and Economic Development committee chairman Cr David Crisafulli praised both the Pallarenda community and the developer for reaching a middle ground on the issue.

“I think we got a good result.”