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Our milestone year

On 15 March, Townsville commemorates the first anniversary of its amalgamation and what a year it has been.

In a year of sweeping change, the community elected a new mayor, Cr Les Tyrell; a new board of directors and CEO were appointed; a budget and corporate plan were drafted and plans made for the future.

Cr Tyrell has bid adieu to one of the most historic years in the city's local history, and predicts the new year will provide a different set of challenges for the council.

"If I was looking for a word to sum up 2008 it would be historic," Cr Tyrell said.

"From amalgamation of two cities to a tough but vital budget, it has been a year of a lot of hard work

that has achieved a great deal toward uniting our new city."

Cr Tyrell said he was confident that while Townsville would feel the fall-out from the global economic downturn in 2009, the city would continue to record strong growth in coming years.

"The diversity in our city's economy means that we don't rely on one particular industry to support our residents' livelihoods, and this will give us a buffer against some of the major negative effects that other cities will face," Cr Tyrell said.

"I have no doubt that 2009 will still be tough for our city but our long term prospects remain very strong."

Cr Tyrell said some of the highlights of 2008 included:

» Starting the process of getting the council's finances back on track with the bringing down of the budget in July.

» A commitment by council to undertake city building projects including plans for a new look city heart.



Sign of the times: new signage is being erected to reflect the amalgamation of Thuringowa and Townsville.

» Upgrading water and waste water infrastructure.

» The redevelopment of Reid Park

» Civic Theatre upgrades.

» Murray Sporting Stadium planning.

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Council thanks graffiti warriors

Townsville City Council has recognised two of its long-time warriors in the battle against graffiti.

Volunteers John Zohn (pictured) and Tony Gray were presented with certificates of appreciation by the Mayor, Cr Les Tyrell.

Mr Zohn has been working to clean up graffiti since 2000, when the Community Graffiti Removals partnership was established.

He used his expertise and experience as a prison officer to supervise young adult offenders who had been ordered by courts

to clean up their graffiti on both private and public property.

Mr Gray volunteered with the program in 2001 and then became a paid employee in 2003. By this stage, the program was showing signs of success – graffiti offences in Townsville dropped off – so the two men moved into more of a hands-on role.

Later, in 2007, when Community Graffiti Removals appeared to be in jeopardy, Mr Zohn personally purchased the graffiti clean-up trailer and now both he and Mr Gray remove graffiti throughout the Townsville area.

Since 2000, they have cleaned up more than 2,100 separate graffiti sites on both

private and business premises; 119 of these were in the last three months of 2008.

Townsville Mayor, Cr Les Tyrell, thanked the two men for their dedication and rapid response.

"Mr Zohn has been instrumental in cleaning up graffiti as quickly as possible. He has coordinated countless cleanups and worked closely with council in the fight against graffiti," Cr Tyrell said.

"He and Tony Gray are at the centre of our Graffiti Action Plan for Townsville.

"The fantastic work that they have done, along with other volunteers, has been visibly effective throughout the city and, further afield, it's won awards and been emulated by other cities."

