

**Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP
Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service
City of Cockburn RSL Sub-Branch
Frederick Road
Hamilton Hill WA 6163**

Distinguished guests, Veterans, the serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force, ladies and gentlemen.

Australians were surprised to hear of the invasion of northern Australia even at a time when the Japanese forces were rapidly expanding through south-east Asia.

As we gather here today to commemorate the 84th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin it is also a time to reflect upon the many towns in northern Australia that were also attacked.

Communications were somewhat different at that time with a home radio generally the only means of getting news – unlike the phrase we have today; ‘We interrupt this program to bring you some BREAKING NEWS’.

The government of the day was more concerned with minimising the angst and anxiety to the populace – in fact ‘KEEPING US IN THE DARK’.

We know today that northern Australia was a target and while we commemorate the Bombing of Darwin on this day we must remember the wars wider impact in the region.

Following the initial Darwin raid Japanese forces launched nearly 100 air raids across Northern Australia until November 1943.

These raids included Broome, Wyndham, Port Hedland and Derby in Western Australia, Katherine in the Northern Territory and Townsville and Horn Island in Queensland.

On 4 March, 1942 the following report appeared in our papers.

W. A. Attacked

North Coast Raids

Broome Bombed

Wyndham Machine - Gunned

Damage But No Casualties

Melbourne March 3 - Western Australia today for the first time in its history tasted the actual violence of war on its own soil when Japanese planes attacked Broome and Wyndham.

Aero drones and aircraft were the objectives of the raiders and some damage was caused at both towns.

At Wyndham there were no casualties and no casualties are reported from Broome, although the details of the attack on this town are not yet complete.

Announcing the attacks on Wyndham and Broome, the Minister for the Army (Mr Forde) said tonight:

"I have received information to the effect that Wyndham was attacked by Japanese aircraft today and another message received indicated that enemy aircraft had also raided Broome and bombed the aero drone. For security reasons I cannot give any further information.

"These raids show the growing seriousness of the war as it affects Australia.

Bombing attacks on our own soil bring the war nearer to Australian citizens.

Three of our towns in the north have now been attacked by the Japanese and we must be prepared for further attacks.

These attacks should make us all the more determined to put every ounce of energy into the war effort, to which everyone in Australia should make his maximum contribution."

The Minister for Air (Mr Drakeford) released the following war communique today:

"Broome and Wyndham, in Western Australia, were almost simultaneously attacked by Japanese aircraft this morning.

The attacks were directed at aerodromes and grounded aircraft.

No bombs were dropped on Wyndham, where the attack was made by machine gun and cannon fire.

At Broome it is reported that bombs were dropped.

Some damage was caused at both towns.

There were no casualties at Wyndham.

Details of the attack on Broome are not yet complete, but no casualties are reported."

The Prime Minister (Mr Curtin), who heard the news of the air attacks at Broome and Wyndham while travelling from Melbourne to Canberra, made the following statement in Canberra tonight:

"As time passes the enemy comes ever nearer".

Darwin, Wyndham and Broome are three important strategical points in the security of Australia as a whole.

I have long been impressed with the menace to the populations in our larger capitals which this part of Australia would constitute if the enemy was able to use it as a base.

Established in the north, his hitting power at the larger centres of population and of economic activity becomes all the more inimical.

So, as we commemorate the Bombing of Darwin let us not forget the wider invasion that occurred at that time and the impacts on those people and their community.

Lest We Forget.