

Attack on Australia - "Bombing of Darwin"

Memorial Service

by

Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP

RSL Memorial Park and Field of Poppies

Spearwood Avenue, Spearwood

on

Sunday 19 February 2017

Good morning.

Veterans, serving women and men of the Australian Defence Force; TS Cockburn representatives and cadets, special guests, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

I thank the Cockburn RSL Sub Branch for their initiative and foresight in organising today's memorial service at the RSL Memorial Park and Field of Poppies as we reflect on the Bombing of Darwin on the 19th February 1942, the first and the largest single attack mounted by a foreign power against Australia.

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land that we have gathered on today, the Whadjup People of the Nyungar Nation and I pay respect to their Elders, both past and present and extend that respect to all Indigenous Australians who are present here today.

A memorial ceremony is held every year on 19 February at the Cenotaph in Darwin when at 9:58 am, a WWII Air Raid Siren sounds to mark the precise time of the first attack by the Japanese Imperial Forces on what was then a very small town.

A very impressive memorial was unveiled in Darwin in 2013, 71 years after that infamous day, a day that will be longed remembered by those present and from the stories they have passed down through the generations to family and friends.

The memorial stands as a permanent reminder to all who visit Darwin, a City that has been rebuilt on two occasions – the first as a result of the bombing in 1942 – the second as a result of Cyclone Tracy in 1974.

Ironically, Darwin is one of Australia's most modern cities as a result of these two incidents.

With a population of just over 160,000 today Darwin remains a strategic centre in terms of its proximity to Asia and Australia's defense capacity and responsiveness.

While people go about their daily activities today we must be cognisant of events that occurred in the past and while the episodes of the Bombing of Darwin will never be forgotten, people's minds have turned to trade, tourism and the adventures that reflect the remoteness of the region.

The memorial unveiled in Darwin in 2013 will be a consistent reminder to all of the events of February 1942 and those that occurred on other parts of our mainland.

As we stand in this 'Field of Poppies' during the centenary of ANZAC commemorative services 1914 - 1918 we have time to reflect on the atrocities of war – the lives that have been taken – the injuries endured – the impacts on families and communities – the new threats that have emerged in terms of terrorism, hostage taking, demands for ransoms, the use and misuse of social media and the fact that our lounge rooms forever more will be a place where we are all 'on the front line' whether we like it or not.

Lest we Forget.