



Darwin City Council

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Media Release - EMBARGO 10.30am 31 August. 2006 Historic 12 Squadron RAAF Australian flag returns to Darwin

At 10.00 am today the Lord Mayor, Peter Adamson, will take delivery of No 12 Squadron's 1942 Australian Flag in the forecourt of Council's Civic Centre.

Lord Mayor, Peter Adamson said that on behalf of Council and the people of Darwin, it was an honour to accept, on permanent loan, the Australian flag of 12 Squadron, RAAF, from the Darwin Defenders Association in Victoria.

The flag, which sustained aircraft gunfire damage, was flying at the Darwin aerodrome on the morning of 19th February 1942 when the first Japanese attack on Darwin took place.

The Lord Mayor said "What happened in Darwin in 1942, the loss of life and the extent of the devastation, was largely unknown to most Australians.

"With the return to Darwin of precious items such as this flag, more and more people will have the opportunity to see and learn about this significant chapter in Australian history".

The flag which also bears the signatures of those who survived the raid, was salvaged by Darwin Defender member Jim Wilkins. The 12 Squadron came to Darwin from Laverton in Victoria in 1939 equipped with Avro Anson Bombers, Wirraway fighter aircraft and a Supermarine Wulrus amphibious aircraft.

It was the first RAAF Squadron permanently based in the Northern Territory. When the Japanese raided Darwin the Squadron lost two Wirraways on the ground and considerable equipment and ammunition when its new hangar was gutted and the 1934 Qantas hangar badly damaged. Group Captain Mark Kelton, RAAF was also on hand to day to witness the flag's return to Darwin.

The 'Darwin Defenders' represent veterans from all services who served in Darwin in 1942, offered the flag to Darwin City Council on permanent loan so that it is more accessible to the public to view. It has been in storage other than when on display at exhibitions at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.

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The civilian population was also greatly affected by the Japanese attack on Darwin and the Darwin Post Office was bombed in the raid and staff members killed. On learning about the need to get the fragile flag to Darwin, Australia Post arranged for the packing, transportation and delivery of the 2metre by 1metre crate.

The flag will initially be on display at the Civic Centre, with plans for display in a permanent WW11 museum in progress.

ENDS

Date: 31 August 2006

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