



Commemoration of the 67th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin
Thursday February 19th, 2009

Address by the The Lord Mayor of Darwin, Mr Graeme Sawyer

I am proud to stand here today and welcome back The Defenders of Darwin, those of you who served so proudly and defiantly here to secure peace in our land.

As you know, Darwin is a very special place and has a unique aura surrounding it. Those of us who love the place implicitly, understand that aura. Many more people wonder about it and are increasingly drawn to us.

That special aura is created partly by our location, so close to the diverse cultures of Asia and so far from the Southern states. That aura is also derived from the uniqueness of our magnificent weather and environment and the wonderful mix of people who call Darwin home.

But most significant in shaping this aura is our history.

This long and fascinating history predates European settlement, as is reflected in the traditions of the Larrakia People and other Indigenous groups. The recent chapter in our history was started as a military outpost (a case of third time lucky in choosing a site), and the military has been an integral part of this recent history.

This year we will celebrate the contribution Charles Darwin made, and we have the powerful legacy of Cyclone Tracy as another key moment when the weather again almost destroyed the City in 1974.

However, there is one event in our time that stands as the most dominant moment in our recent history. It is the day when the horror of war came to our shores.

Of course I refer to the bombing of Darwin and its surrounds by Japanese Imperial Forces on this day in 1942.

And so we are here today to welcome you all to this 67th Anniversary of the bombing Of Darwin, and to thank those who defended our country and its ideals from attack by the Axis forces in the Pacific.

While we rightly pause to remember other major military events such as Anzac Day and Armistice Day and anniversaries of other important battles in our history, it is the Bombing of Darwin, which presents such a confounding mystery.

This is characterised by the fact that the destruction caused by the bombing remained a secret from the rest of Australia and the world for many years. That there were some 64 or so attacks in the Darwin area still comes as a surprise to many Australians and to people from overseas.

Our goal today and for the future is to remove that shroud of mystery and call on people to remember those who gave their lives and celebrate the triumph of your victory in defending Darwin.

This should also be a time when we reflect on the Australian men and women who gave their lives in order to preserve our freedom, both here and on battlefields around the world.

In this past year we've also had a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by Australian men and women in the armed services with the discovery of the final resting place of HMAS Sydney.

More recently of course, young men and women are still serving in areas of conflict for the Australian Defence Force and still today we mourn the loss of servicemen who have died in the conflict in Afghanistan this year.

And so today, we will join with you in remembering the ravages of conflict and at the same time, celebrate the mateship and special human bond that comes through facing adversity together.

We here in Darwin hold you in our hearts with the greatest of pride. Your presence here today bestows upon us an immense honour, and in future years and for future generations we and those who follow us will always remember what you did here.

We will work to make sure that the rest of Australia is also aware.

LEST WE FORGET