**DARWIN DEFENDERS COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY**

**19 February 2020**

**STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET**

**When War Came to Australia Darwin 19 February 1942**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Background Reading**

The attack on Darwin in February 19 1942 by the Japanese was the first attack by an enemy on the young nation.

The devastating attack by 242 Japanese aircraft was one of Australia’s greatest disasters. Our defences were totally inadequate against such an attack. Eight of the 45 ships in the harbour were sunk and many others damaged. 23 aircraft were destroyed and the death toll stood at 243, more than half of whom had been on the ships in the harbour with 350 wounded.

The Japanese had armed forces of 9,100 000 which outnumbered Australia’s 993 000 by more than 9 to 1 and the situation was desperate. The islands to the north were swiftly overrun by the Japanese forces and by the end of 1942 Japan occupied and controlled all the islands to the north of Australia except the southernmost strip of New Guinea.

We are intensely proud of these men and women who served in the Northern Territory in these dangerous times and fought back with everything they had which wasn’t much – no fighter aircraft, the infantry had only 5 rounds of ammunition each, the machine guns enough for 5 minutes, the Ack Ack (anti-aircraft guns) were told to use the 1916 ammo first and one unit had 80 rifles between 700 men!

Strict censorship was imposed on any information about the air raids, or anything that happened in the area. No cameras, no diaries, no mention of any enemy action in letters home. This censorship was carried even further to the extent that official documents were stamped ‘Not to be released until 1995’. Officially the government thought it would be better if Australians knew nothing about it for at least 50 years after the event.

As a result of this Australians generally know very little about those who served in the Darwin area – the shortage of food and ammunition and the dangers and discomforts endured for months and years to prevent the Japanese taking Australia.

Darwin was bombed on 64 different occasions and the efforts of those who served at the time are largely unknown and unrecognised. That is why we hold ceremonies such as this and try to educate young Australians about this defining moment in Australian history.



**DARWIN DEFENDERS ASSOCIATION MELBOURNE**

**Try to answer these questions and discuss them with your teacher and classmates at the end of the ceremony.**

1. How many Japanese aircraft attacked Darwin on 19 February 1942?

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2. Approximately how many people were killed and wounded?

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3. How many times did the Japanese bomb Darwin?

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4. Why do ceremonies like this often have a flypast?

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5. What were the names of the two young Darwin defenders that Dr Reid mentions in his speech?

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6. What type of medal was Fred Wombey awarded?

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7. What special structure was Fred Wombey defending from attack? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is a cenotaph?

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9. What does the eternal flame symbolise or represent?

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10. Why are wreaths traditionally laid on graves and memorials?

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