

Darwin Defenders 1942-45
80th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin
Shrine of Remembrance – 19th February 2022

Saturday 19th February 2022 marked the 80th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin. With bright clear blue skies and the lifting of some COVID-19 restrictions, the Melbourne Branch of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 was able to hold the service on the forecourt of the Shrine of Remembrance.

The service honours those who served and those who died during the attacks on Darwin during 1942 - 1945. It is an opportunity for veterans, their families, dignitaries and school students to participate in a respectful service that aims to remind us of the cost of preserving peace and democracy in Australia.

This part of our history is often overlooked, but the service at the Shrine provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the events that were tragically significant in Australia's History.

This was highlighted by the keynote given by Rear Admiral John Lord AM (Retired) *80 Years and Learning from History* ... marking key events in our history, taking the time to stop and remember, and ensuring they are commemorated into the future, reminds us of our history, our development, and how we have become the country we are.

With many schools imposing excursion restrictions due to COVID-19, it was wonderful to have students from Ashwood High School, Christ Church Grammar School and Puckapunyal Primary School attend the service. Student Gemma Koch from Puckapunyal PS commented ... *We read out the Darwin Defenders Day Memorial poem written by Darwin Defenders President, Alan Day and laid a wreath with many others alongside the eternal flame. It was a very special day.*

MC for the service, Mr Tim Gurry OAM acknowledged and thanked the inestimable number of Indigenous people who served Australia during both WW1 and WW2 and continue to serve today. Many Aboriginal people joined military units, others became auxiliary workers to the Defence Force - becoming guides in the outback and providing material support. Some joined semi-uniformed units such as the coast watchers, Naval and Marine sections.

The Music for the service was provided by the Australian Army Band Melbourne and the Catafalque party attended from HMAS Cerberus. The Ode was recited by Dr Robert Webster OAM, President of RSL Victoria and Reverend Siôn Gough Hughes from the Wesley Church in Melbourne led the prayers.

Wreaths were laid by representatives from State Government, City of Melbourne, Navy, Air Force, Army, The Consular Corps including Consulate General of Japan, United States of America, Great Britain and New Zealand. The ex-service community was represented including the Air Force Association (Mr Max McGregor), Legacy, The Victorian RSL, American Ex-Servicemen's Association & Department of Veterans Affairs Victoria.

The concluding song by Gary Luck – “Blood on the Frangipani” was a beautiful musical tribute to his father and all those that had served during WWII.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwjNmT5kj60>

The 80th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin was supported by the Victorian Government and the Victorian Veterans Council, and we are so grateful that they have continued to acknowledge the importance of this day in the commemoration calendar for Victorians.

