

Darwin Defenders 1942-45
81st Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin
Shrine of Remembrance - Monday 20th February 2023

Sunday 19th February 2023 marked the 81st Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin. In 2023, to enable schools to attend the commemoration, the service was held on Monday 20th February.

It was with the support of the Veterans Council of Victoria; 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.

On a beautiful Melbourne morning, Shrine Governor, Colonel John Coulson OAM, RFD ED (Retired) welcomed many dignitaries, families of veterans, school students & teachers to the Shrine on the auspicious occasion on the 81st Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin

One Air Force heritage aircraft from No. 100 Squadron performed an impressive flypast in support of the Commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin.

The 2023 Keynote Address was given by Ms Michele Gallin (Vice-President of the Melbourne Darwin Defenders 1942-45). Michele's father a founding member of the group in Melbourne and poignantly Michele was able to share the importance of the 19th of February with the attendees and the significance of learning about our family history, the impact of war on families and the reason we commemorate the Bombing of Darwin here in Melbourne each year.

This service allows us an opportunity to recall key events in our history, giving us the time to stop and remember, and ensuring the men and women who served in The Top End are commemorated into the future.

It was wonderful to have students from Avila College, Christ Church Grammar School, Ivanhoe Primary School, Wesley College Glen Waverley, Xavier College and Puckapunyal Primary School attend the service.

MC for the service, Mr Tim Gurry OAM acknowledged our late President ... *It is with sadness that we no longer have the author of this poem with us today. Mr Alan Day died peacefully on the 25th of July 2022. Alan had reached his 100 years in February of that year, and he was absolutely thrilled with all the official recognition – especially the card from the Queen! Alan served in the RAAF as a medical orderly in Darwin and took part in the invasion of Borneo in 1945. The Darwin Defenders 1942-45 Melbourne will miss Alan as President and great supporter. Alan had called Mornington home and for many years he tirelessly assisted in fundraising for Legacy, War Widows Guild and the Weary Dunlop Foundation. He moved to Vasey RSL Care at Frankston South in 2021. Alan is someone who had made a difference in the community ... someone who had lived 100 years many of which he devoted to serving his country with pride.*

The Music for the service was provided by the Melbourne Air Force Band and the Catafalque party attended from HMAS Cerberus. The Ode was recited by Commodore Greg Yorke AM SCS and Reverend Siôn Gough Hughes from the Wesley Church in Melbourne led the service prayers.

We were delighted that Ms Natalie Suleyman, MP was able to attend her first service at the Shrine as the newly appointed Victorian Minister for Veterans and representing the Premier of Victoria.

Wreaths were laid by representatives from the State Government, the State Opposition, the City of Melbourne, Navy, Air Force, Army, The Consular Corps including representatives from the Consulate General of Japan, United States of America, Great Britain, and New Zealand. The ex-service community was represented including the Air Force Association 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 81st 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.

