



**THE TERRITORY  
REMEMBERS  
75 YEARS**

**Commemorating the Bombing of Darwin  
and defence of Northern Australia**

**On 19 February 1942 mainland Australia came under air attack for the first time when Japanese forces mounted two air raids on Darwin.**

On that day, 242 Japanese aircraft attacked Darwin in an attempt to prevent the Allies from using it as a base to contest their new-found victories in SE Asia and their intended invasion of New Guinea. At the time the northern port was only lightly defended and the Japanese inflicted heavy losses upon the Allied forces at little cost to themselves.

In the first attack, which began just before 10am, Kate bombers from four aircraft carriers bombed the harbour and town. Val dive bombers and Zero fighters then attacked shipping in the harbour, the military and civil aerodromes and various infrastructure. Of the 10 defending American fighters, nine were shot down. The attack ceased after about 25 minutes. Four of the 188 Japanese aircraft were brought down, with one crash-landing on Melville Island where its pilot was captured.

The second raid, which started around 11.45am, involved high altitude bombing of the Royal Australian Air Force Darwin base by 54 twin-engine Betty and Nell bombers.

The two raids killed 235 people and more than 400 were wounded. Thirty aircraft were destroyed, nine ships in the harbour, and two outside, were sunk and many of the civil and military facilities in Darwin were damaged.

Some of Darwin's remaining population feared that the Japanese were about to invade. There was panic and a number of Darwin's remaining civilian population fled. The majority of women and children had been evacuated previously under government orders between December 1941 and February 1942.

Order was restored to the town within a few days. The military defences were eventually rebuilt and strengthened.

The air raids on Darwin continued until November 1943, by which time the Japanese had assaulted the Northern Territory around 100 times.

The Bombing of Darwin is to this day the largest single most destructive attack ever mounted by a foreign power on Australia.

The Territory Remembers program commemorates the 75th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin and the Northern Territory's significant involvement in World War II.



Front image: Oil Tank Darwin 1942  
NTL PH0808-0004



[www.territoryremembers.nt.gov.au](http://www.territoryremembers.nt.gov.au)