

Darwin Defenders 1942-45

Report by Bernadette Lightfoot, Secretary of the Melbourne Branch of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45

76th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin

The Melbourne Branch of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 were once again honoured and privileged to be able to organise the 76th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin at Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne on Monday 19th February 2018.

Accompanied by music of the Royal Australian Navy Band, President Alan Day lead the march of the Darwin Defenders banner from the flagpoles to the flame.

An incredible flypast of 5 vintage aircraft from the Point Cook Air Museum was certainly a highlight for the many attending Veterans, families, VIPs, teachers, students and the general public.

Master of Ceremonies, Mr Tim Gurry OAM, expertly guided the service. With welcomes from Shrine Governor, Colonel John Coulson OAM RFD ED (Retired) and Patron of the Darwin Defenders Melbourne Branch, Rear Admiral John Lord AM, the service began with dignity, respect and acknowledgement of the sacrifices made in 1942.

Chaplain Barrie Sutton spoke these poignant words before leading the prayers ... 'It was the brave and resolute people in Darwin – those in the military and civilians who stood side by side, at huge personal cost, who fought back the enemy that we might live in peace. We remember them today with thanksgiving'.

State President Victorian Branch RSL, Dr Robert Webster, OAM kindly accepted the Committee invitation to deliver the 2018 Keynote Address. His address was not only a wonderful 'history lesson' for the attending veterans, VIPs, students, teachers and members of the public but provided an opportunity for us to better understand the events and the reason for us to continue to pause, reflect and honour each year for commemoration.

A highlight of this service has always been the involvement of school students. This year students from Puckapunyal Primary School, The Kind David School and Ivanhoe Girls Grammar assisted during the service with reading of poems and carrying the Darwin Defenders banner. A student from Avila College in her report of the day reflected that the service was very informative and gave her an opportunity to really know what happened in Darwin in 1942.

The 19th February 1942 was a day that changed Australia and we all echo Dr Webster's address final words in his address – "We will continue to remember and commemorate those Australians and Americans who were killed, injured or otherwise suffered during the bombing of Darwin".

The Melbourne Committee of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 acknowledges and is extremely grateful for the support of the Victorian Veterans Council.