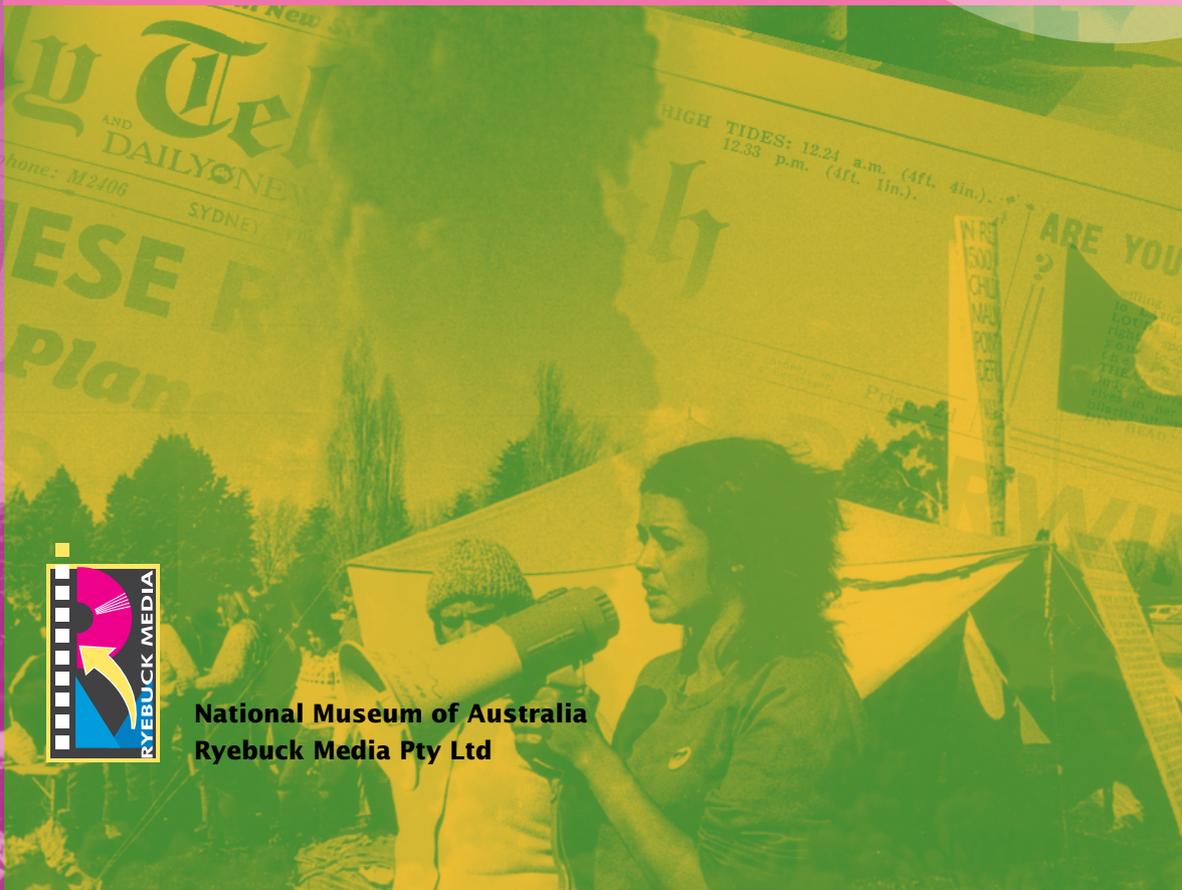




Australian History Mysteries 2

Five case studies in
twentieth century Australian history



NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
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CANBERRA



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Written by Robert Lewis, Tim Gurry, David Arnold

Produced by

 **NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
AUSTRALIA
CANBERRA**
National Museum of Australia
Schools Program Section
GPO Box 1901
Canberra ACT 2601
Phone (02) 6208 5239
Fax (02) 6208 5198
Email schools@nma.gov.au
Website <http://schools.nma.gov.au>



Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd
31 Station Street Malvern
Victoria 3144
Phone (03) 9500 2399
Fax (03) 9500 2388
Email ryebuck@ryebuck.com.au
Website www.ryebuck.com.au

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Case Study two

Why did the government lie about the bombing of Darwin?



Overview

Why was the bombing of Darwin 'hushed up' by the government? Was there a warning that was ignored? Was there looting and cowardice by soldiers? Was 19 February 1942 Australia's 'day of shame'? Students visit the sites, analyse maps, interrogate witnesses, sequence the events, and come to their own conclusions. It is a powerful study of the behaviour of people at a time of great danger and stress, and an exploration of a government's moral dilemma — to lie and maintain order, or to tell the truth and perhaps encourage panic and defeatism?

Key learning outcomes

After a study of this unit students will be better able to:

- understand some reasons for Australia's involvement in World War II
- identify a key place where Australians fought in World War II
- describe the experiences of Australians serving in World War II
- explain the impact of the war on Australian civilians
- outline the arguments for and against restrictive controls in wartime, such as censorship of news.

Teachers' Guide

Classroom planner

Classroom activities	Resource pages required	Suggested classroom format (Class, group, individual, library/home)	Approximate classroom time
1 — Fire! What would you do?	1	Classroom discussion	15 minutes
2 — Images of war	2–3	Individual and classroom	10 minutes
3 — Video visit	4–7	Classroom and groups	40 minutes
4 — An inquiry	8–14	Groups	40 minutes
5 — Was it right for the government to lie?	15	Class	20 minutes
6 — Creating images in wartime	16–17	Class	10 minutes

Classroom strategies

In this unit students become investigators of the behaviour of a particular group under pressure in wartime, and also members of a Royal Commission of Inquiry set up to come to conclusions about what happened at Darwin on 19 February 1942.

It is important to be careful about the judgements students may make about people who are in situations that most of us never have to face. To try to help them understand this, **Activity 1** introduces them to the idea of people having different responsibilities in a situation according to their roles, and how those responsibilities might change under extreme conditions.

Activity 2 asks them to begin empathising with people in a combat situation, as well as thinking about the nature of evidence and representations of the past.

Students then 'visit' Darwin in **Activity 3**, see some of the places referred to, and start to gather ideas and information that they can apply as they explore the issues further.

Activity 4 is the key section, and it is in two parts. Students have to both investigate an aspect of what happened on the day, and then make judgements based on all the evidence presented to them. Students work in groups to present information about one or several groups to the whole class, but then the whole class discusses their overall conclusions based on the evidence available.

In **Activity 5** students consider a key issue — why the Commonwealth Government initially lied about the Darwin casualties. They should be able to develop a range of ideas and arguments both for and against the government's decision in the extreme circumstances that existed.

Finally, **Activity 6** helps students to appreciate the 'heroic' nature of some of the official war art of the time, and to decide what is needed to create a fair and accurate representation of such an event.

One of the key conclusions students are likely to reach in this case study is how difficult it can be to make judgements based on limited evidence — limited both by the amount of evidence available, and the fact that different witnesses can see different things, and interpret what they see differently, from the same event.

Key discussion points

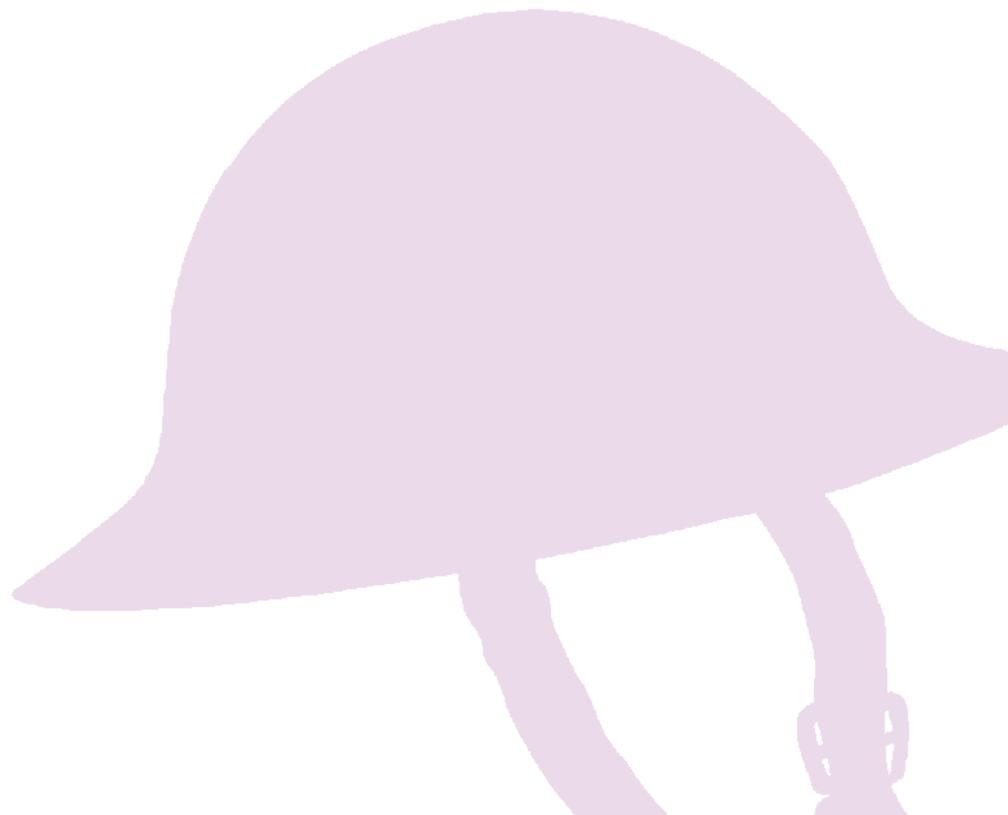
- Is it OK for governments to lie in wartime?
- Is there information that a government needs to keep from its people?
- We celebrate the ANZAC tradition in Australian history, but should we also acknowledge those occasions when Australians have behaved badly or not as well as expected?
- We make judgements about people in the past. Is this fair?
- Should Australia rely on itself for defence, or should it tie itself to a 'great and powerful friend'?

Web activities

The web activity at www.nma.gov.au/ahm/home.html is designed to help students realise that Darwin's defences were inadequate, regardless of the behaviour of people on the ground that day. By being forced to make decisions about Darwin's defences, students will better appreciate the reality of what happened on the day and why.

Acknowledgement

This unit was developed from the two main general books on the attack: Douglas Lockwood, *Australia Under Attack*, New Holland Publishers, Sydney, 2005 and Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942: Australia's Darkest Hour*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981; and the work of Northern Territory writers and historians who have studied the events, in particular Tom Lewis, *A War at Home*, Tall Stories, Darwin, 1999 and Alan Powell, *The Shadow's Edge: Australia's Northern War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988.





Fire! What do you do?

Imagine that a major fire has suddenly started in your school. You hear the alarm, and can see that the fire has taken hold, but has not gone out of control.

- 1** How would you react? What would you do? What should you do? Brainstorm this idea and discuss your responses.
- 2** Here are some people in the school — explain what you think each of them should do in this situation.

Principal	
Teacher with a class	
You in class	
Other students in your class	
Office staff	
Teachers with no classes	
Parents who are waiting to collect kids	

You will have worked out your response according to what is reasonable and responsible in the situation. Some people had a greater responsibility than others.

- 3** Are there others not mentioned who would have had a role beforehand — for example, education department officials who planned fire safety features in schools? Fire fighters? Others?
- 4** What if some students are in fact trapped in a room. Does this make a difference to what you would expect any of the people above to do?
- 5** What about after the fire — do people still have any responsibilities in this situation, such as not to loot the remains of the school?

Most Australians are never called upon to act in a way that shows their heroism, or lack of it.

But during World War II a large part of a generation of Australian men and women were put in that situation. How did they react? That is what you will explore in this unit — what happened when people faced a crisis, how they behaved, and whether people and governments behaved responsibly in the circumstances.



Images of war

Forming ideas

This unit is about war, and specifically about a bombing attack on Darwin.

1 Look at these photographs showing aspects of the Japanese attack on Darwin on 19 February 1942. If you **ONLY** had this evidence about that event, describe:

- what happened
- who was involved
- how people responded
- what people would have felt about it.



(AWM 128108)



(AWM P02759.009)



(AWM 012741)



(AWM 012696)



Images of war

2 Now look at this painting of the same event. Write down a series of words in response to it.



(Keith Swain, *Attack on Darwin*, AWM ART 28075)

3 Compare the two sources of evidence (the photographs and the painting) about what happened. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Consider also the strengths and weaknesses of other sorts of evidence about the event that you will look at soon — people’s memories of it, news film, physical remains on the site, and historians’ accounts of it.

Source of evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Photographs		
Paintings		
People’s memories		
Physical remains		
News film		
Historians’ accounts		



Video visit

On 19 February 1942 war came to Australian soil. One hundred and eighty-eight warplanes took off from the decks of a Japanese aircraft carrier fleet, and flew 350 kilometres south-east to Darwin, to attack and destroy.

There were 64 raids on Darwin in total during the war, but it is the first two raids on 19 February that were the most devastating, and which are still controversial in Australian history.

“ *In this first battle on Australian soil, it will be a source of pride to the public to know that the armed forces and the civilians comported themselves with the gallantry that is traditional in the people of our stock.* ”

(Prime Minister John Curtin, quoted in Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981 page 17)

“ *The first time in history that Australia was attacked by an enemy is not one from which we can draw much pride. The people in Darwin were neither prepared for an attack that was inevitable, nor brave when it came. A hundred Japanese armed with frying pans, an RAAF officer said disgustedly when it was over, could have occupied Australia that day.* ”

(Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981, page 7)

Some have argued that people reacted as well as could be expected, and many acted bravely and selflessly; others that it was Australia’s ‘day of shame’, with cowardice during and looting following the raid — which reflects badly on Australians’ character. And then there is the role of the Australian Government, which initially lied about the seriousness of the attack. Are such lies acceptable in wartime?

What is the truth of the situation? That’s your task: to look at some of the evidence available and decide for yourself how people and governments reacted, and whether those reactions were acceptable or unacceptable at the time.

To do this you will hold an inquiry into the behaviour of eight key groups on the day: the governments (Commonwealth and Northern Territory); the Australian Army, Navy and Air Force; civilians; and the people there from two other nations, the United States and Japan.

Did they behave well, or did they falter under the pressure? Did all services react equally well? Did civilians panic? Was there looting? Did the Japanese respect hospital facilities and avoid attacking them? Did the Northern Territory authorities lead effectively? Did the Australian Government behave appropriately?

These are the key questions you will need to investigate.

You will do this by ‘visiting’ Darwin, gathering evidence, and preparing a report on that group to present to a Royal Commission of Inquiry — which will bring all the evidence of different groups together, and make a general finding. You are all members of that Royal Commission, as well as special investigators of particular groups.

You should complete a page like this to summarise all the reports you hear (only those marked * apply to the Japanese).

Group being investigated:	
*Evidence of good behaviour:	
*Evidence of bad behaviour:	
Did they panic?	
Were they involved in looting?	
*Did they do their duty well?	

After each group has reported to the Royal Commission, your task is to use all the evidence to come to your conclusion on these main questions:

- Did Australians behave well?
- Why did the government lie? Was this justified?



Video visit

1 When was Darwin bombed?

2 Why?

3 What were the effects or impacts?

4 Why was it an important event in Australian history?

5 How did people behave during and after the event?

6 What sort of evidence exists in the community to study such an event?

7 List the different sorts of evidence about this event that are shown in the video.

8 What are the 'mysteries' about this event that you are being asked to investigate further?



Video visit

Background briefing

Australia is at war

In 1939 Australia had joined the war between Britain (and its allies) and Germany (and its allies) over German expansion into other countries.

Japan enters the war

In December 1941 Japan, previously neutral in the war, but now seeing a chance to seize a Pacific empire, attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor. It also launched invasions of Malaya (now Malaysia), the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and the British colony of Singapore. Australia declared war on Japan.

Australia is under threat

Australia had based its security in the area on the presence of the British naval base at Singapore, but the Japanese swept through the area. Thirty thousand Australian soldiers, nearly one fifth of all Australia's servicemen, were taken prisoner of war. Suddenly, Australia looked vulnerable. Australians now expected a Japanese invasion!

Darwin is at risk

Darwin was now Australia's front line — and it was poorly equipped for the task. It had too few anti-aircraft weapons; the guns designed to attack ships at sea were not in place; it had few aircraft to use against attackers, and these were hopelessly inadequate against the modern Japanese warplanes. Its radar installation, one of only three in Australia, was not working.

The attack starts

Although a warning was sent to Darwin from Bathurst Island when the Japanese attacking force flew over that island, the message did not lead to the sounding of the air raid alert — the RAAF officers were arguing over whether they were Japanese planes or American ones, and so no warning alarm was given to the ships, or to the anti-aircraft gunners and civilians.

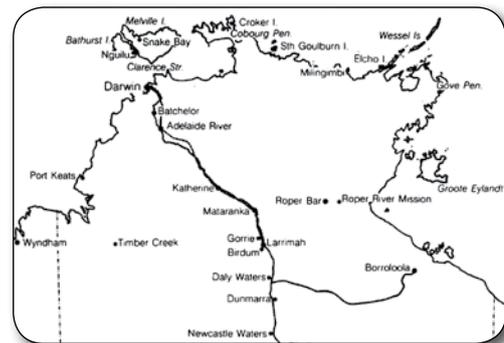
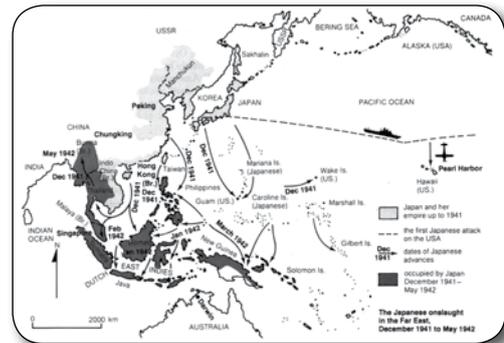
The planes crossed the mainland coast at a point 40 kilometres east of Darwin, continued inland for about 30 kilometres, and turned west to the final target area, Darwin, coming in unexpectedly from the south-east. Just before 10.00 am the Japanese warplanes attacked ships in Darwin Harbour, then parts of the town, the military and civilian aerodromes, and a hospital at Berrima, 12 kilometres from the town centre. This raid lasted 40 minutes. At 11.45 a second wave of 54 bombers, based in Kendari, in the Celebes, swept over the RAAF base and attacked it again.

The damage caused

The raids, involving more planes and bombs than those at Pearl Harbor, caused enormous devastation in the harbour and the town. Twenty-one ships were sunk or badly damaged in the harbour; at least 243 people were killed; twenty aircraft were destroyed; many government buildings were wrecked. Japanese losses are not definitely known, but a minimum of five, and possibly seven to ten, of the attacking aircraft were shot down by the defenders.

Reporting the attack

The first public report stated that seventeen people had died — but that was a lie. Official records now put the number of deaths at 243 — though some experts argue that there were more killed. Those who died included members of all three Australian services, merchant seamen, wharf workers, postal workers, American sailors and airmen, civilian workers, and Japanese pilots. The dead included men and women, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, Chinese residents, a teenage girl, a grandfather, and a family of three.



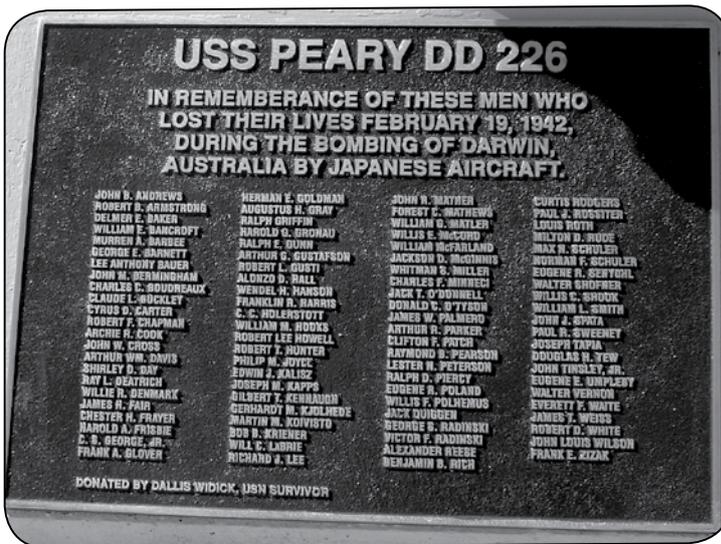
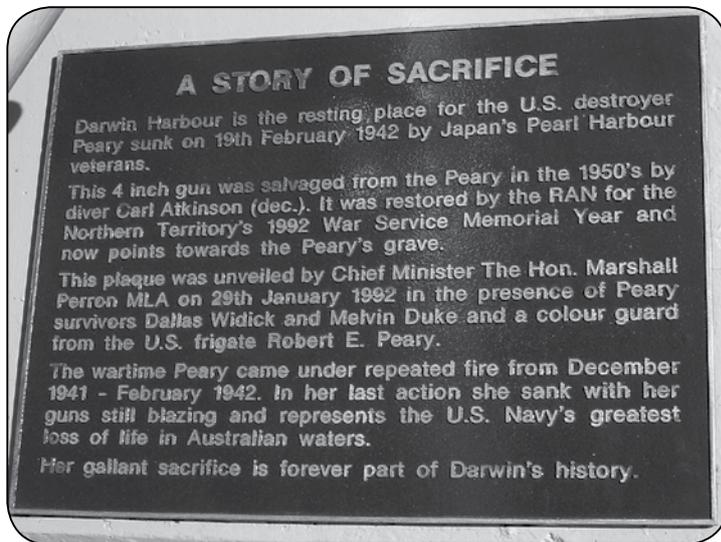


An inquiry

Evidence of the behaviour of American servicemen during and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)

Evidence 1 Memorial plaques



Evidence 2 American pilots

At the start of the raid five American Kittyhawk P-40s were refuelling on the ground, and five were on watch in the air. The attacking enemy immediately killed two pilots. A third was wounded, but managed to land and scrambled into a slit trench and safety. Another pilot managed to parachute to safety. The fifth, Oestreicher, escaped into cloud, then shot down two of the dive bombers and managed to escape. The planes on the ground all desperately tried to get airborne. All knew that their chances of getting into the air were virtually nil, but they tried. One got off the ground, but was shot down. The pilot bailed out 25 metres above ground and survived the fall, only to be machine-gunned and killed on the ground. Another staggered out from his aircraft after it had crashed while trying to take off, and was dragged into a slit trench by an Australian and just avoided being machine-gunned. The two other pilots also crashed and were wounded, but staggered away to safety.

Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



An inquiry

Evidence of the behaviour of the Australian Army during the and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)



(AWM ART22720)

Evidence 1 Soldiers under fire

Gunner Hudson ran out with only a tin hat, boots, and towel wrapped around him — which soon fell off. He stood in the open to fire a machine gun, ‘He maintained effective fire on aircraft attacking the position and showed great courage and tenacity and complete disregard for his own personal safety.’

Lance Sergeant Fraser was in charge of the machine gunners protecting the oil tanks, which you would expect to be a principal target of the raid. ‘He displayed great courage and coolness in holding his fire whilst the position was being attacked by Dive Bombers and Machine Gun fire from the air ... His action in his exposed gun position contributed largely to the failure of the enemy to dive bomb and destroy the vital areas of the Naval oil tanks he was defending.’

(Quoted in Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981 page 82)

During the raid an ammunition store caught fire. A party of volunteers went into the blazing store and carried the explosives out to safety.

Evidence 2 The anti-aircraft gunners

‘Anti-aircraft fire was intense but largely ineffectual.’ Commander Fuchida, leader of the Japanese raid on Darwin

‘The [anti-aircraft] batteries operated efficiently and the personnel performed very creditably in their baptism of fire.’

Justice Lowe

(Quoted in Douglas Lockwood, *Australia Under Attack*, New Holland Publishing, Sydney, 2005 page 78)

Evidence 3 After the raid

Most of the soldiers at Larrakeyah Barracks took off at three in the morning, which was devastating on morale. The Provost Corps (military police) was an unruly, undisciplined, drunken mob.

Looting began straight after the end of the first raid. Although civilians were certainly involved, it was the armed services and predominantly the Army, spearheaded by the Provost Corps, which was most to blame. To a lesser extent the Navy and RAAF were involved, as were officers and men of the US forces. Nobody accepted responsibility for law and order.

Looting was carried out systematically, with the Provost Corps bringing in trucks to load the goods — furniture, appliances, toys, clothes, pianos, ornaments.

Soldiers were openly taking refrigerators, radios, sewing machines and clothing to the wharves and selling them to seamen on the merchant ships.

(Based on Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981 pages 134, 161, 162, 168)

Evidence 4 Looting

Lieutenant Graham Robertson, commenting on his anti-aircraft unit’s looting of houses after the attack: ‘We had little food and the anti-aircraft crews doing heavy work in the tropical heat weren’t getting enough to eat. We were also short of a few other home comforts and I saw no reason why we shouldn’t borrow what we could find in the abandoned Hotel Darwin opposite the Oval. I organised a raiding party ... Refrigerators were not working and food was beginning to rot, so we helped ourselves to chickens and vegetables and anything else we could use ... Thereafter we had the best equipped gun sites in the north — cane furniture, smokers’ stands, inner spring mattresses. We were also very lonely in the next few days while we waited there on that promontory for the invasion we all believed was imminent.’

(Douglas Lockwood, *Australia Under Attack*, New Holland Publishing, Sydney, 2005 page 159)

Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



An inquiry

Evidence of the behaviour of the Air Force during the and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)



(AWM 012741)

Evidence 1 A survivor remembers

‘Out on the runways we had machine-gun posts. Pretty daggy they were, just holes in the ground with machine guns mounted up, way in the open. We weren’t game to go near them because they were deadly. One of our officers did go out there, firing away, until a Zero came round and shot him.’

‘Outside our block there was an air raid trench and we jumped in. There were bombs dropping all around us and you could see the machine gun bullets running up the fibro walls and through the roofs. We had our rifles and tin hats and some of us did try to shoot the Jap planes but it was impossible. You think you can do these things but you can’t. They were that fast, zooming down and past you. I didn’t think about dying, I just thought about getting out of the way. Everyone was cursing the Jap!’

(Les Barnett in Daniel Connell, *The War at Home*, Sydney, ABC, 1988 page 44)

Evidence 2 During the attack

During the attack many raced into the bush, but about 50 manned machine guns and rifles and fired at the attacking aircraft.

Evidence 3 After the attack (1)

The order was given that men were to move half a mile down the road, and half a mile into the bush. This vague order became further garbled, and led to a panic mass evacuation. Some airmen left, but realising that there was no plan, immediately returned to their duties at the base.

Evidence 4 After the attack (2)

‘[I]n the absence of proper leadership, there was a near-stampede as officers, non-commissioned officers and aircraftsmen alike ran away. They ran so far and so fast that days later hundreds of them had still not reappeared. It was primarily the result of bad leadership, and bad communications, but it was also, as an observer noted in his diary, “Australian servicemen at their very worst”. The word cowardice was pointedly avoided, but for many of those who turned tail and fled, it would have been very close to the mark ... The officers left, and the men “were just like a lot of lost sheep who had no idea what to do”.’

(Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981 page 96)

Evidence 5 After the attack (3)

Many later claimed that they had taken to the bush because they expected the air raid to be followed by a Japanese landing and they were unarmed ... Many acquired vehicles, and got to Batchelor, Adelaide River, Alice Springs, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne.

Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



An inquiry

Evidence of the behaviour of the Navy during the and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)

Evidence 1 Recommendations for awards

Able Seaman Scott — ‘He continuously fought off dive bombers and machine gun attacks on HMAS *Koala* in the face of heavy fire thereby probably saving his ship from destruction and probable loss of many of the crew.’

Leading Cook Emms — [He came up from the galley and took control of a machine gun.] ‘Whilst seriously wounded he continued to fire his machine gun on HMAS *Kara Kara* during a continuous machine gun attack by enemy aircraft thereby probably saving the ship and many of the ship’s company. He eventually succumbed to his injuries.’

Leading Seaman Ericsson — ‘Though badly hurt by splinters [aboard HMAS *Platypus*] he took a leading part in saving a number of men who were caught under a jetty and in great danger from burning oil.’ Over one hundred men were trapped under the jetty, with flaming oil from burst pipes all around them. The *Neptuna* was ablaze nearby, with its cargo of explosives. Ericsson was one of several men who volunteered to help. In spite of shells exploding on the deck of the *Neptuna*, Ericsson, though wounded, swam to the men and bodily pulled out many who would otherwise have drowned through wounds and exertion.

Evidence 2 Rescuing survivors

Some of the crew of the hospital ship *Manunda* took a boat across to the *Peary* to pull in men who were floundering in the burning water. They pushed their lifeboat to within a few metres of the *Peary*, right among flames and exploding ammunition. They saved 35–40 men.



(AWM 134955)

Evidence 3 HMAS *Katoomba*

HMAS *Katoomba* was in dry dock, a sitting duck. Every member of the crew was on the deck firing the ship’s guns and personal weapons at attacking planes — with success.



Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



An inquiry

Evidence of the behaviour of Darwin civilians during the and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)



(AWM 304996)

Evidence 1 Air Raid Precautions (ARP)

Few civilians showed any interest in helping form an Air Raid Wardens group. Meetings were called and few came to join. However, a small group agreed to act, and when the attack came they were there, working to rescue wounded and recover the dead.

Evidence 4 Chinese

A representative of the Chinese community went to the ARP office and offered to stay and help — he received no answer, so led most of the people out of town.

Evidence 2 Harbour manager

There was plenty of room in the harbour to spread ships out. The hospital ship *Manunda* was close to the US destroyer *Peary*, the most important target in the harbour that day. On the day of the raid, when a raid could have been expected, she was tied to the wharf, next to a naval ship, close to three other ships, and with one engine disabled.

Evidence 5 Indigenous people

For some weeks the belief had been widespread that in the event of an air raid Indigenous people would panic and run, but it seems that none left Darwin, except by direction.

Evidence 3 A public servant

Department of Civil Aviation employee John Waldie acted in disregard of his own safety. He was knocked down by a bomb blast, then instead of seeking shelter, he saw men needing rescue in the water, and he and another DCA employee, Ray Crocker, started rescuing men from the burning water, despite shells and bullets in the area. He made several trips in a small boat rescuing over 100 people, despite the fire, shelling and being near an ammunition ship on fire.

Evidence 6 Wharf labourers

Nobody was forced to work on the wharf. All knew that it could be dangerous, but all chose to stay — though they were very well paid. They constituted 22 of the 37 civilian deaths, and many stayed after the raid to help.

Evidence 7 Merchant seamen

Some merchant seamen deserted their ships after the raids, but most did not.

Evidence 8 An historian's account

First hand accounts from responsible officers made immediately after the event all agree that during the raids the townspeople stood up to the ordeal remarkably well and there was little sign of panic. Very soon after the raids ceased, however, a rush out of town started.

(Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942–1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1955 page 141)

Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



An inquiry

Evidence of the behaviour of local government officials during the and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)

Local Administrator

Evidence 1 Before the raid

'The Northern Territory Administrator, Abbot, was nominally head of Air Raid Precautions (ARP), but was totally uninterested and had done nothing to organise it — when the Japanese attacked there were few air-raid shelters, few slit-trenches, no plans for where people were to go, no first aid posts, and no instructions had been given in first aid.

The Administrator said he would take care of everything [for organising the ARP] in combination with ourselves, but all we did was fill some drums with dirt and rocks in various areas around town, We didn't have any training. All we did was meet and say what we would do.

The wardens resigned as a group after the failure of the authorities to provide sandbags for first aid stations.'

(Edward D'Ambrosio in Daniel Connell, *The War at Home*, Sydney, ABC, 1988 page 41)

Evidence 2 During the raids

During the air raid Abbot, his wife and eight servants took shelter in the building, which took a direct hit, with an Aboriginal maid, Daisy Martin, probably killed. After the raid, Abbot ordered several policemen to help remove crockery and glassware to safety — all the time Daisy was dead there. There is a suggestion she was not dead, but this seems most unlikely.

The wife of the Administrator, Hilda Abbot, left half an hour after the raid, offering no leadership to others by remaining.

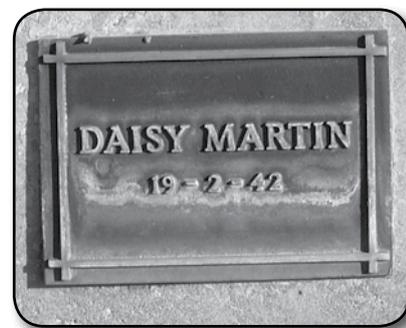
Abbot stayed at his post, but later accused the Chinese of being virtually the first to panic and evacuate, and the wharf labourers' union leaders of running 'like hares'.

Police

Evidence 3 Police behaviour

Constable Eric McNab, with his ribs broken, worked all through the day of the raid, into the night, and all next day, helping to rescue people.

All local police seem to have stayed and helped where possible after the raids.



Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



An inquiry

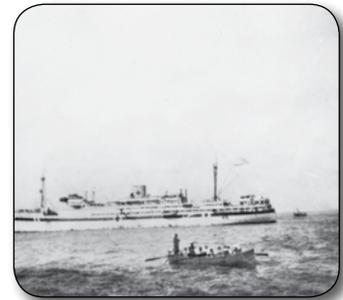
Evidence of the behaviour of Japanese airmen during and after the Darwin raids

Here is the evidence presented to you during the investigation. Use it to create a summary table like that on Resource Page 4. In creating your summary, take into account the problems that exist with evidence — such as how reliable it is, and how you deal with accounts that may be contradictory. (For this exercise where a source is not specifically referenced that means it is taken from accounts by historians, and can be taken to be accurate.)

Evidence 1 Attack on the hospital ship *Manunda* (1)

'For the first fifteen minutes of the attack the Japanese left the *Manunda*, clearly marked with red crosses, alone. Then it was hit. An eye-witness saw the dive-bomber release its bomb, and has no doubt it was deliberate and carefully aimed. The pilot came back three times, machine-gunning the ship. After the war Commander Fuchida said that the pilot had disobeyed orders by attacking the ship. In Fuchida's favour is the fact that the ship could have been easily finished off if the attacking planes had wanted to.'

(Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Methuen, Sydney, 1981 pages 42–43)



(AWM 134960)

Evidence 2 Attack on the hospital ship *Manunda*

'Japan had been a signatory to the Geneva Convention guaranteeing immunity to hospitals, hospital ships and all other places and persons carrying the Red Cross ... Red crosses were painted unmistakably on *Manunda*'s funnel and deck. Senior officers had flown over the ship to make sure that they were plainly visible. In the first fifteen minutes of the raid the Japanese pilots left her alone ... Some witnesses have said that what subsequently transpired was caused accidentally when the destroyer Peary and the Catalina tender *William B. Preston* both passed close by in their attempt to escape. The accuracy of the pilots in hitting other targets does not support that view.

Captain Cousin on *Katoomba* saw a dive-bomber approaching *Manunda* from the south and directly in line with his own ship in the floating dock. He expected the Japanese to fly over *Manunda* and come at him. He was astonished, instead, to see the plane hurl its bomb at the hospital ship. It struck near the bridge and sent up a brown cloud of shattered wooden hatch covers.

In fact, that was the second bomb aimed at *Manunda*. The ship's chief officer, Captain Thomas Minto, reported that while their boats were picking up survivors from the destroyer *Peary* and other sinking vessels, *Manunda* shuddered and rolled from the effects of a near-miss. Her decks were sprayed with shrapnel from the explosion and four people on board were killed.'

(Douglas Lockwood, *Australia Under Attack*, New Holland Publishing, Sydney, 2005 pages 52–53)

Evidence 3 Attack on Berrima hospital

The Berrima hospital looked very similar to the Larrakeyah Army Barracks, which were not attacked. The red crosses painted on the rooves would not have been visible from 7,000 metres.

There was an anti-aircraft detachment close to the hospital. They shot down a Japanese plane, but were in turn machine-gunned, and shots hit the hospital as well.

Evidence 4 The nature of the targets

Only 15 of the dead were civilians killed in the town — which suggests that there may be some substance to the Japanese claim that their pilots were instructed not to bomb the town.

Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.

Present your report to the class, and add this evidence to your overall conclusion about how people in Darwin reacted to the Japanese attacks.



Was it right for the government to lie?

Coming to a conclusion: Was it right for the Commonwealth Government to lie?

Darwin was inadequately defended against a Japanese raid or invasion that was expected by the Commonwealth Government to occur at some time. You have seen the impact of the two raids of 19 February on Darwin, and the behaviour of people during them.

The official announcement made to the Australian people on 20 February was that the total casualties were 17 killed and 24 wounded, several ships had been hit and damage done to wharves and buildings and some of our aircraft damaged on the ground. That was a lie. The government soon allowed the true figures to be publicised.

- 1 Prepare a set of arguments or reasons that support the government's decision to lie.
- 2 Prepare a set of arguments or reasons that suggest the government should have told the truth.
- 3 What is your own decision about what the government should have done?

Here is some extra information that might help you discuss the issue.

Some historians' opinions

“Darwin has attracted many myths, not the least being that news of it was suppressed. It was certainly diminished. The following day news reports put the death toll at 17, but word of the raids on Darwin was never suppressed, not least because it supported the Curtin government's desire to mobilize Australians into working, fighting or saving by frightening them about what could happen.”

“The attacks on Darwin prompted understandable fears that the air attacks would soon be followed by an invasion force. Here begins the sorry story of the so-called “Darwin panic” and the disorder which accompanied it. While men did abscond and loot in the chaotic days following the attacks, the stories have become folkloric. They need to be considered carefully. The historian of the Northern Territory's war, Prof. Alan Powell, has established that the reports of mass panic, of men riding bicycles to Alice Springs and hitching rides on night-soil carts to escape from the town have been greatly exaggerated. Prof. Powell's book *The Shadow's Edge* gives us a more accurate understanding of the attack and its aftermath.”

<http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/remembers1942/darwin/transcript.htm>

“Darwin has been Bombed –but not Conquered”

“We must face with fortitude the first onset and remember that whatever the future holds in store for us we are Australians and will fight grimly and victoriously.”

“Let us each vow that this blow at Darwin and the lives that it has involved, and the suffering it has occasioned, shall gird our loins and steel our nerve.”

“We, too, in every other Australian city can face these assaults with the gallantry that is traditional in the people of our stock.”

John Curtin

Newspaper reactions





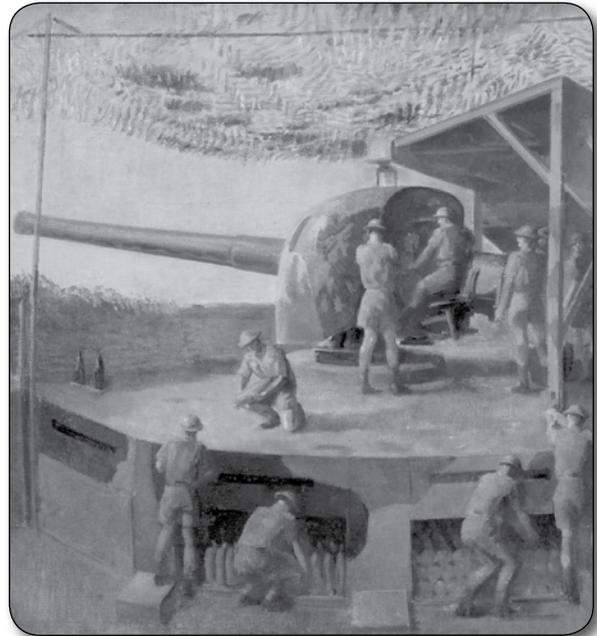
Creating images in wartime

How are images created in wartime?

Here are four works done by official war artists.



(AWM ART22724) Hodgkinson, Roy 14 Australian Anti-Aircraft Battery 1942



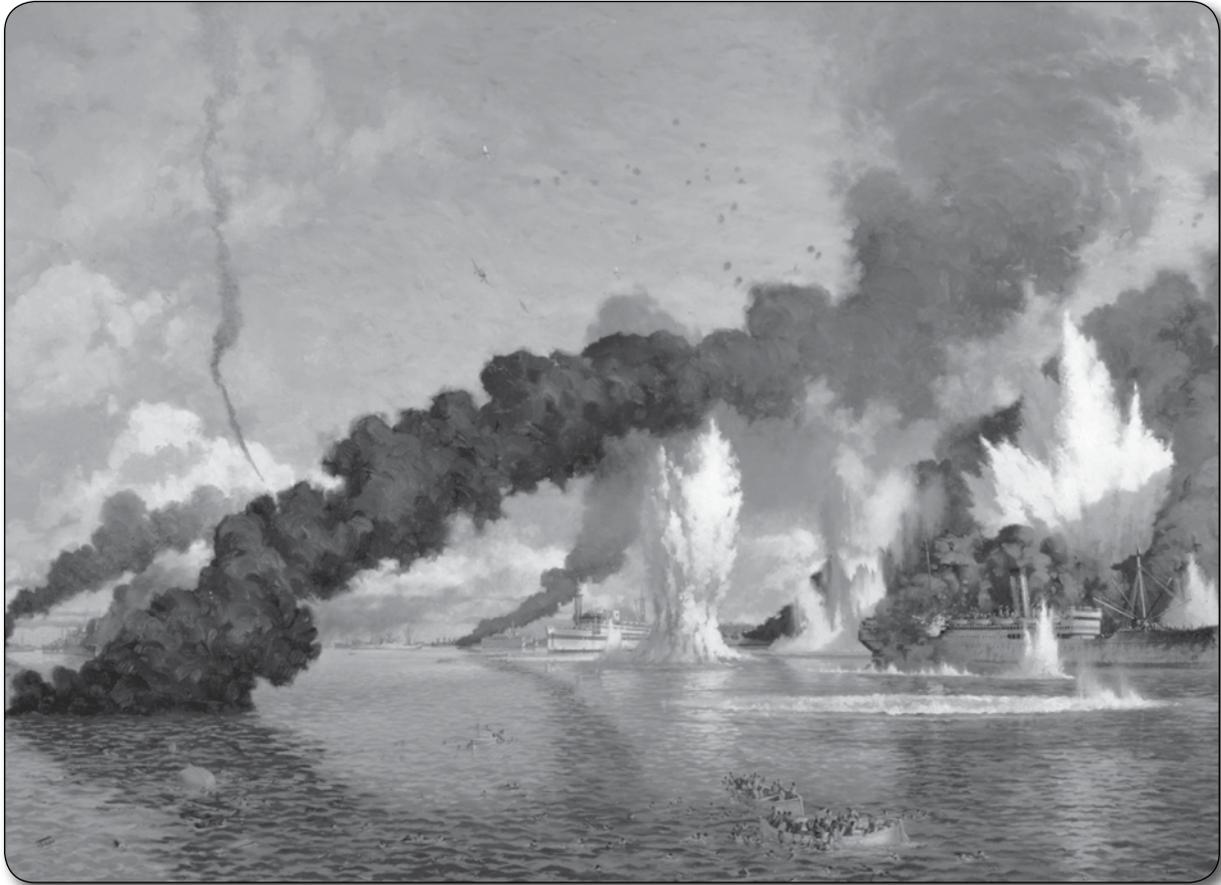
(AWM ART22186) Murch, Arthur Artillerymen from the Australian Military Forces crew a 6 inch naval gun on the coast in Darwin 1943



(AWM ART 22720) Hodgkinson, Roy Anti-aircraft defences of the 14th Anti-Aircraft Battery 1942



Creating images in wartime



(AWM ART28520) Honisett, Ray Air raid, harbour; HMAS *Deloraine* 1984

- 1** Comment on the image being created — is it a fair and accurate one?
- 2** What other images might you want to see if you were putting together a collection of art on the story of the bombing of Darwin?



Australian History Mysteries 2

Five case studies in twentieth century Australian history



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