

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

**77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin – Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**“Today, on the Bombing of Darwin Day, all Australians are encouraged to remember those who protected our shores and tragically died when the Japanese launched bombing raids on Northern Australia during the Second World War”**

*The Hon Darren Chester MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC*

The Melbourne Branch of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 were once again honoured and privileged to be able to organise the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

Accompanied by music of The Air Force Band directed by Flight Lieutenant Daniel Phillips, President Alan Day led 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. We are privileged that Squadron Leader Glen Coy and his team are able to support this auspicious occasion.

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’.

Anne Connor, Author of TWO GENERATIONS – a book that shines a light on the attacks of Darwin during WWII, kindly accepted the Committee invitation to deliver the 2019 Keynote Address. Anne Connor is a daughter of a Darwin veteran. She first travelled north in 2012 for the 70th Commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin. On that trip, she realised the little known facts surrounding February 19, 1942 and the subsequent 18 months of Japan's systematic bombing of the then frontier town and the north of Australia. Shocked to realise, most Australians are ignorant of what happened on Australian shores, and intrigued by the story, she set out to know more. Her book, *Two Generations* shines a light on what transpired in the north of Australia during World War II and the ramifications for one soldier and his family. Anne's 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 King David School assisted during the service with reading of poems and carrying the Darwin Defenders banner. Students attended from **Ashwood High School, Glen Eira College, Ivanhoe Girls Grammar School, Kilbreda College , Puckapunyal Primary School, Christ Church Grammar School, Star of the Sea College, The King David School, Wesley College Xavier College**

The 19<sup>th</sup> February 1942 was a day that changed Australia and we all echo the words from the Minister – *“Australians should never forget the day the Second World War came to our doorstep, and we shall honour the sacrifices of those who served, and tragically died, in defence of our nation”*