

**Darwin Defenders 1942-45
Melbourne Branch**

83rd Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin

Shrine of Remembrance. Wednesday 19th 2025

Wednesday 19th February 2025 marked the 83rd Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

It was with the support of the Veterans Council of Victoria, that the Melbourne Branch of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 was able to hold a school, veteran and public Commemorative 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, Deputy Chair of the Shrine Colonel Catherine (Bunny) Corrigan welcomed many ADF personal, dignitaries, families of veterans, school students & teachers to the Shrine on the auspicious occasion on the 83rd Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

Music for the service was provided by the Melbourne Air Force Band.

Once again, expertly leading the proceedings, our MC for the service, Mr Tim Gurry OAM - began by reading a welcome from the Darwin Defenders Patron, Rear Admiral John Lord AM, RAN (Retired).

Always a highlight of the service is the participation of students from Puckapunyal Primary School and The King David School. Victorian schools were also represented by students from Avila College, Christ Church Grammar School, Ashwood High School, Kilbreda College and Lauriston Girls School.

The 2025 Keynote Address was given by Lieutenant Commander Richard Mingramm RAN, from HMAS Cerberus, poignantly sharing the importance of the 19th of February in terms of our own history but also our shared history with the United States of America, having 10 weeks previously, experiencing the Bombing of Pearl Harbour. Similar stories of heroism and compassion arose from the ashes. His concluding remarks ... "these moments of human kindness remind us that even in our darkest hours, compassion can prevail. They teach us that in the face of violence and hatred we must cling to our shared humanity."

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.

The Ode was recited by Lieutenant Commander Richard Mingramm RAN and Reverend Siôn Gough Hughes from the Wesley Church in Melbourne led the service prayers.

Wreaths were laid by representatives from The State Opposition, 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 Victoria, The Victorian RSL, American Ex-Servicemen's Association, Vasey Care, weary Dunlop Foundation, Battle for Australia Foundation TPI Victoria & 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>

Instrumental in ensuring the success of the service, was the ongoing and much appreciated support given by ADF Joint Ceremonial, Shrine Guards, Office of Ms Zoe Daniel MP, Shrine of Remembrance Ceremonial Staff, St John's Ambulance and the Schools and Teachers and Students who continue to attend the service.

The significance and importance of the day is highlighted by an official letter sent by The Hon. Natalie Suleyman MP, Minister for Veterans to the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 post service.

'I thank you, President Mrs Robyn Bell, and the Committee of the Darwin Defenders 1942-45 Melbourne Branch for your delivery of the service and ongoing work. Your commitment to ensuring the stories, and incredible sacrifice, of those that served is commendable - you play a vital role in insuring that we never forget what they gave for our nation, and you have organised an excellent service.'

The Victorian Government is committed to commemorating and honouring our veterans.'