



Australian American Association Queensland Division – Brisbane



News Flash 119 - 25th February 2026

Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Qld.



84th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

The Bombing of Darwin on 19th February 1942, marked the largest single attack on Australia by a foreign power during World War 2, resulting in significant destruction and loss of life.

The Attacks

On 19th February 1942, Darwin, located in the Northern Territory of Australia, was attacked by Japanese forces in two separate air raids. This was the first time the Australian mainland had come under attack. The first raid began at approximately 9:58am, involving **188 Japanese aircraft** launched from aircraft carriers in the Timor Sea. The second raid followed around 11:45am consisting of **54 land-based bombers** targeting military installations and the town itself.

Casualties and Damage

The attacks resulted in **235 deaths** and **400 injured** among the local population and military personnel. The Japanese forces destroyed **30 aircraft and 8 ships**, and caused extensive damage to civil and military infrastructure, including the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base and the town civil aerodrome. Notably, the attacks inflicted heavy losses on the Allies while the Japanese suffered minimal casualties, losing only **5 aircraft** during the raids.

Strategic Content

The bombing was part of Japan's broader military strategy to secure its conquests in Southeast Asia and prevent Australia from serving as a base for Allied counter-offensive. The attacks aimed to disrupt Allied operations in the region, particularly in support of the defence of Timor and Java, which were under threat from Japanese advances.

Aftermath and Commemoration

In the wake of the bombings, more than half of Darwin's civilian population evacuated the area permanently. The event is commemorated annually on the **Bombing of Darwin Day**, recognising the sacrifices made by both military personnel and civilians during this critical moment in Australian history. The bombing was a significant event in Australia's military history, highlighting the vulnerability of the nation during World War 2 and the impact of the war on its home fronts. The Bombing of Darwin serves as a reminder of the challenges faced during the war, and the resilience of the Australian people in the face of adversity..

Lest we forget.

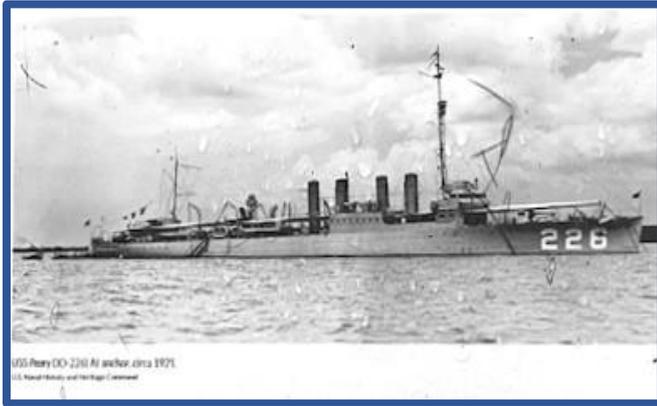
Yours sincerely,

Carol Morris,

President, Australian American Association, Gold Coast.



The Sinking of the “USS Peary”.



Darwin Harbour holds the final resting place of the Clemson Class Destroyer “USS Peary” lost on 19th February 1942 during the devastating Japanese aircraft attack.

The aircraft that struck her were launched from 4 of the same 6 Imperial Japanese Navy Carriers that had attacked Pearl Harbour only weeks earlier in December 1941. Peary endured repeated enemy assaults in the largest air raid ever to reach Australian shores and she fought back with unwavering resolve, her guns firing until the moment she slipped beneath the water.

The 4 Inch gun displayed at the memorial was recovered from the wreck in the 1950's by diver Carl Atkinson. Restored by the Royal Australian Navy for the Northern Territories 1992 War Service Memorial Year it now stands pointed towards the ship's resting place, a Silent Sentinel honouring her crew. The memorial plaque was unveiled on the 29th of January 1992 in the presence of survivors Dallas Widdick and Melvin Duke accompanied by a Colour Guard from Frigate “USS Robert E Peary” the vessel carrying forward her name.

Only in 2021 was it confirmed that Peary's stern had been torn away during the attack by Japanese dive bombers. Her propellers and turbine rooms lay undiscovered for nearly eight decades separated by kilometres from the remainder of the wreck on the floor of Darwin Harbour. Ninety two United States Navy Personnel perished aboard Peary, marking the greatest loss of US naval life in Australian coastal waters.

Their courage and sacrifice remain forever woven into the military history of Darwin and are an enduring bond between our two great nations. Many dignitaries attended the Commemoration Event including:

- Ms Linda Fazldeen AM Event Master of Ceremony,
- Capt. Bernadette Alexander RAN,
- Senator Tim Kaine U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services.
- Acting Consul Jordana Cox Representative of the US Consulate General,
- Osamu Yamanaka Consul General of Japan,
- Chaplain Esava Koro RAN,
- Brad Flaherty RSL SA State President.
- Bradley Torgan President of the Australian American Association NT,
- Australian American Association Representatives: Alicia Doherty Canberra President & Association Federal President, Mike Harris, Brisbane President and Teresa Pokoj Brisbane Secretary.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the ADF Northern Command, Royal Australian Navy and the United States Marine Corps Rotational Force-Darwin for their support at the commemoration event.



Ms Linda Fazldeen AM, serving as the Event Master of Ceremony, formally delivered the Official Welcome at the commencement of the proceedings. Her introduction set the tone for the commemoration, acknowledging the significance of the event and welcoming all dignitaries, participants, and attendees.



Address by Bradley Torgan, President of the Australian American Association, NT who organized the Commemorative Service. The 4 Inch Gun displayed at the Memorial was recovered from the wreck, and now stands pointed towards the ship's resting place as a silent sentinel honouring her crew.



The Australian Defence Force Northern Command, Royal Australian Navy Flag Party.



The United States Marine Corps Rotational Force Darwin, Colour Guard.



The United States Marine Corps Rotational Force Darwin, Colour Guard standing with the guests seated for the Commemorative Service.



Representatives of the Australian American Association standing together from left - Mike Harris (Brisbane President), Alicia Doherty (Canberra President & Association Federal President), Teresa Pokoj (Brisbane Secretary), and Bradley Torgan (NT President).



Teresa Pokoj, Secretary of the AA Association, Brisbane joins with the US Marine Corps Colour Guard, following the Commemorative Service.





AA Association Brisbane President Mike Harris standing beside the “USS Peary” Signage. The RAN Patrol Boat seen in the distance, is anchored directly over the wreck of the Peary.

The Location and Significance of the “USS Peary” Memorial

For members of our Association and friends who may wish to visit the “USS Peary” Memorial, it is located in the City of Darwin in the Northern Territory, prominently positioned along the Esplanade, Darwin, overlooking Darwin Harbour. The memorial is easily accessible and situated within a precinct rich in wartime heritage, making it an important destination for those wishing to better understand Australia’s experience during the Second World War.

The memorial stands as a powerful and enduring tribute to the “USS Peary (DD 226)” and the brave sailors who served aboard her. On 19 February 1942, during the devastating Bombing of Darwin, the destroyer was repeatedly attacked and ultimately sunk while defending the harbour. This assault marked a defining moment in Australia’s wartime history, bringing the reality of the Pacific conflict directly to Australian soil and forever changing the strategic importance of the nation’s northern coastline.

The memorial honours the 92 crew members who lost their lives in the attack and serves as a lasting symbol of the deep and enduring friendship between Australia and the United States. That bond, forged in shared sacrifice and strengthened through

co-operation in defence of freedom, remains an important part of the historical legacy commemorated at this site.

For visitors, the memorial offers far more than a historical marker. It provides a meaningful place to reflect on the courage, dedication, and sacrifice of those who served during one of the most significant military attacks ever experienced on Australian soil. It also stands as a reminder of the broader human cost of war and the importance of preserving the memory of those who gave their lives in service.

A Setting for Reflection

Overlooking the wide expanse of the Timor Sea, the “USS Peary” Memorial is set within a peaceful and contemplative environment that encourages quiet reflection. The open sky, sweeping coastal views, and gentle sea breeze create a calm and dignified atmosphere that contrasts starkly with the violence of the events the memorial commemorates.

The surrounding parklands and waterfront pathways add to the sense of tranquillity, allowing visitors time and space to pause, reflect, and connect with the history of the place. The site invites contemplation not only of the events of 1942 but also of the enduring values of service, courage, and international friendship that arose from those difficult days.

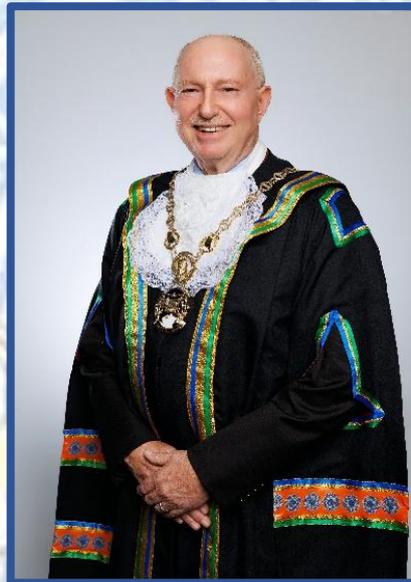
Whether visiting to pay respects, to learn more about the wartime history of Darwin, or simply to appreciate the natural beauty of the harbour foreshore, the memorial provides a dignified and moving setting. It stands as a place where past and present meet where the sacrifice of the crew of “USS Peary” is remembered with honour, and where future generations are reminded of the resilience and bravery that shaped this chapter of Australian history.



Commemorative Service for the 84th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin held at 9:30am on 19th February 2026, at the Darwin Cenotaph – Darwin, Northern Territory.



A ship burning in Darwin Harbour from the Bombing.



Lord Mayor of Darwin the Honourable Peter Styles.

Lord Mayor's Message.

On the 19th of February 1942, the bombing of Darwin forever changed our city and marked a pivotal moment in Australia's History. At 9:58am that morning Darwin came under attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy in the first of two air raids on the city. That evening more than 230 lives were lost and over 400 people were injured. It remains the largest single attack ever carried out on Australian soil. Today, 84 years on, we gather not only to remember those who lost their lives, but to honour the veterans, survivors and families whose courage and resilience shaped the Darwin we know today.

Darwin's identity is built on resilience, diversity and connection, forged in moments of history. The legacy of the Bombing of Darwin remains central to who we are today and continues to shape how we grow as a city and face the future with resilience.

February 19 will always remain a defining moment in the history of our city. Recognised as a National Day of Observance, it is the time for reflection and remembrance. At 9:58 am, we pause to mark the exact moment the first bombs fell, ensuring this chapter of our history is never forgotten. As Lord Mayor, I am proud to stand with our community in remembrance today. May we honour the past and carry forward the lessons of history.

Lest we forget

Bombing of Darwin 84th Anniversary Commemoration Service.

Nearly 3,000 people joined on Darwin's Esplanade to mark the Bombing of Darwin 84th Anniversary, remembering Australia's wartime history together. On 19th February 1942, over 200 Japanese planes attacked Darwin, killing 235 and wounding 400. This event was the largest foreign assault on Australian soil and led to roughly 90 raids in the north, changing Australia's security outlook. Despite rain, the large crowd gathered at the Cenotaph, with sirens honouring those affected by the Bombing. The ceremony included a re-enactment by ADF Service Personnel. The attack was a turning point that ended the belief Australia was safe from war

As is tradition, the 84th Anniversary Commemoration Service began with a historic re-enactment of the bombings, featuring current Australian servicemen and women.

Representing Defence Minister Richard Marles, Federal Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling described the tragic events as "a day that shattered any illusion that Australia was beyond the reach of war". "The attack was profoundly shocking" he said.

"Until that moment, war had felt distant, something happening far away in Europe, in the Middle East or across the other side of the Pacific, but the bombing changed that forever." NT Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro said the Anniversary was a time for reflection, remembrance and resolve.



Three large-roofed pavilions were erected to accommodate the large number of attendees at the event.



The Australian Defence Force Northern Command, RAN and Army Flag Party guarding the Monument, which was adorned with many beautiful wreaths.



Consular Officials and Defence Personnel representing a number of countries neighbouring Australia, took part in the commemoration by laying wreaths at the Monument. This solemn act served as a tribute to those who lost their lives in the bombing, reflecting the shared remembrance and respect among international communities. Their presence underscored the significance of the occasion and the enduring bonds formed through times of adversity.





The involvement of students from both primary and secondary schools in Darwin and across the Northern Territory, was a significant part of the commemorative service. These young participants respectfully laid wreaths at the monument, joining the broader community in paying tribute to those affected by the Bombing of Darwin. Their participation highlighted the importance of passing on the legacy of remembrance to future generations, fostering a sense of connection to Australia's history and the values of resilience and unity.



Among the many beautiful wreaths, a distinctive, red-flowered wreath can be seen, bearing the Icon of the Australian American Association, Brisbane. This wreath was respectfully laid by President Mike Harris and Treasurer Teresa Pokoj in honour of the occasion. The Monument was further enhanced by Australian native flowers and other vibrant arrangements, creating a solemn and meaningful tribute.



A new mural honouring World War II Gunners has been unveiled at Darwin Military Museum as part of a campaign to attract Australians to experience war time history on home soil.

Website: <https://bit.ly/30MvXha>

The museum aims to highlight the Gunners' sacrifices and inspire visitors to learn about Australia's history. The mural illustrates camaraderie, resilience, and intense battles, supporting the museum's educational goals. This campaign establishes the Darwin Military Museum as a top destination to experience wartime Australia.



The Honourable Lia Finocchiaro MLA Chief Minister of the Northern Territory - Reception Commemorating the 84th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin held at 11:30am on 19th February 2026, at Main Hall, Parliament House, Darwin.



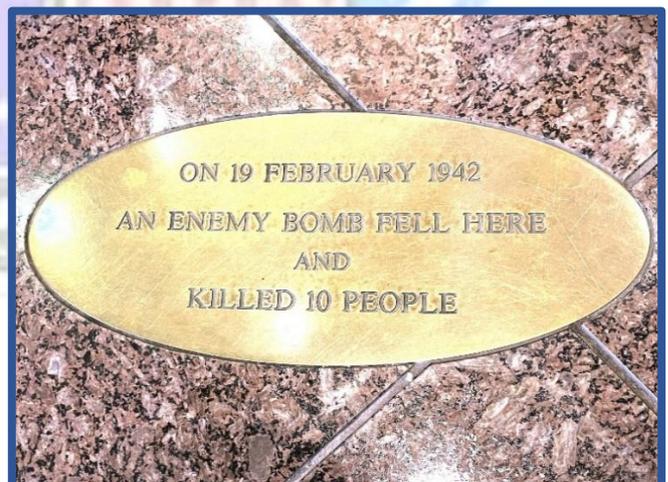
Australian American Association, Brisbane President - Mike Harris and Secretary Teresa Pokoj were among the dignitaries invited to the Reception by the Honourable Lia Finocchiaro MLA Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. They are standing on the beautiful green lawn behind the NT Parliament House.



The Australian American Association Representatives meeting with the Darwin Lord Mayor and his wife at the Luncheon held at Main Hall, at the NT Parliament House. From left - Bradley Torgan (NT President), Mike Harris (Brisbane President), Ms Linda Fazldeen AM (wife of the Lord Mayor), the Lord Mayor of Darwin the Honourable Peter Styles (who is also NT AA Association Vice-President), Teresa Pokoj (Brisbane Secretary), and Alicia Doherty (Canberra President & Association Federal President). Close to where the above AA Association group is standing, a bomb fell and killed 10 people during the first day of the Bombing of Darwin.



NOTE: In the upper right-hand corner of the above photo of the vertical column supporting the roof structure – the vertical column is made in the design of a descending Japanese Bomb.



NOTE: Brass Plate located in the Main Hall floor of the NT Parliament House, that marks the spot where 10 people died from a Japanese bomb that fell on or near the Darwin Post Office. The earlier Post Office building had previously stood on the site of the present NT Parliament House.



Mrs Anne Anderson and Australian American Association, Brisbane President Mike Harris, standing in the Main Hall of the Northern Territory Parliament House, on either side of a Display Panel entitled “They only had One Life to Give”.

Mrs Anderson described to Mike the following tragic event about how 3 members of her family, had been killed: -

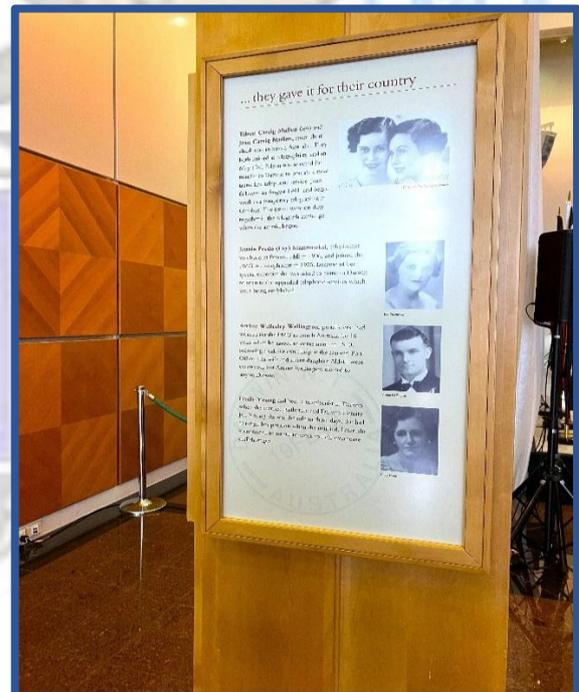
“My great aunt Alice was the Postmaster Hurtle Bald’s wife. Hurtle, Alice and their daughter Iris were all killed when the trench they were in, received a direct hit and 9 people from the post office were killed. Alice was my grandmother’s sister (my father’s side) but unfortunately I didn’t know about this tragic event for many years. Their 15 year old son/ brother Peter Bald, was in Adelaide at boarding school at the time, so a very sad time for him and I don’t know what happened to him. My grandmother died when my father was a baby, so he knew very little details and perhaps like many families, the acknowledgement and details of the war were not shared.

Obviously like many descendants I would like to learn more about my family, so hopefully attending the bombing commemoration, can support my knowledge and understanding.”

There are two sets of Display Panels hanging in the Main Hall of NT Parliament House, as follows:



The First Display Panel is entitled: “They had only one life to give.....”



The Second Display Panel is entitled: “.....they gave it for their country”

Both of these display panels are dedicated to the memory of the 10 people who had died from bombs, which fell on or near the Darwin Post Office, that had previously stood on the site of the present NT Parliament House.

Those who died here had known that Darwin's postal and telecommunications facilities would be a primary target during any attack on the town. They also had known for some days that an attack was inevitable. Despite this, they continued their work until after the raid had commenced and news of it had been transmitted south. Then they sought shelter in a slit trench. A bomb fell directly into the trench, killing nine people outright, and mortally wounding another.

The following are the names of the 10 people mentioned on the 2 display panels:

Hurtle Clifford Bald, postmaster, started work as a messenger in the postal section of the Post Master General's Department (PMG) in 1909. He served in Darwin as postmaster between 1928 and 1934, and during that time he received the first air mail ever carried from England to Australia. He returned to Darwin in September 1940 for a second term as postmaster.

Alice Bald had been a schoolteacher in South Australia. She came to Darwin with her husband Hurtle in 1940. In late 1941 she refused to be evacuated, and volunteered to remain to work as a telephonist at Darwin telephone exchange.

Iris Enid Bald was the only daughter of Hurtle and Alice Bald. She had worked in the PMG Department in Adelaide before coming to Darwin with her parents in September 1940. Her brother Peter, the only son of Hurtle and Alice Bald, was in South Australia at the time of the raid.

Archibald Thomas Roy ("Bro") Halls, telegraph supervisor, joined the PMG in 1907, aged 15 years. He served at several remote locations in South Australia and the Northern Territory before he began work in Darwin as a telegraph supervisor just five days before the raid. He left a wife, three daughters and a son.

Walter Robert Lewis Rowling, foreman mechanic, was mortally injured during the raid, and died aboard the hospital ship Manunda. He had come to Darwin to help install new telephone facilities necessitated

by the defence build-up. He had been here less than two weeks before the attack.

Eileen Carrig Mullen and Jean Carrig Mullen, spent their childhood in South Australia. They both trained as telegraphists, and in May 1941 Eileen was selected for transfer to Darwin to operate a new trunk line telephone service. Jean followed in August 1941, and began work as a temporary telegraphist in October. The sisters were on duty together in the telegraph exchange when the air raid began.

Jennie Freda (Fay) Stasinowski, telephonist, was born in Broken Hill in 1906, and joined the PMG as a telephonist in 1925. Because of her special expertise she was asked to come to Darwin to operate the upgraded telephone services which were being established.

Arthur Wellesley Wellington, postal clerk, had worked for the PMG in South Australia for 10 years when he agreed to come north in 1940, following a call for extra help at the Darwin Post Office. His wife and infant daughter Aldyth were evacuated, but Arthur elected to stay in Darwin.

Emily Young had been a telephonist in Darwin when she married Katherine and Darwin identity Jim Young. As was the rule in those days, she had to resign her position when she married. Later, she volunteered to return to work to help overcome staff shortage.





The Honourable Lia Finocchiaro MLA Chief Minister of the Northern Territory welcoming the distinguished guests to the Reception Commemorating the 84th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin held at Main Hall, Parliament House, Darwin.



Australian American Association Brisbane President Mike Harris and Secretary Teresa Pokoj visiting the Foyer of the Northern Territory Parliament House, where Memorabilia from the Bombing is displayed, including a piece of Shrapnel from an exploded Japanese Bomb.



Guests seated at the Reception, who had been invited by the Honourable Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Among the dignitaries, were representatives from Australian and Foreign Governments, Consulates and Embassies, Australian and Foreign Defence Force personnel, as well as Veterans, Community Groups and Multi-Cultural Organisations.



From left - The AA Association's Alicia Doherty (Canberra President & Federal President) and Teresa Pokoj (Brisbane Secretary), after a huge and satisfying day spent attending the three Bombing of Darwin events. They are seen enjoying the seafoods and liquid refreshments at a sidewalk café, following a refreshing swim in the Darwin Waterfront Lagoon.

Accessing Links to the Official YouTube Videos.

Please access the following links to the official YouTube videos, which have been prepared by Peter Rasey, Special Projects Officer, Australian American Association, Brisbane:

2026 "USS Peary" official YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRxsVVUhwHI&list=PLv0V6xrRuq2kiSO8ypPIJi3pu4afxTkX6&index=30>

2026 Darwin Bombing official YouTube link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgZL_ClvqnQ&list=PLv0V6xrRuq2kiSO8ypPIJi3pu4afxTkX6&index=29

Gratitude to Distinguished Organisers and Others.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Honourable Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and Chief of the Parliament, as well as the Lord Mayor of Darwin, the Honourable Peter Styles. Their dedication and efforts in arranging the Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service and Reception, as well as their kind invitation to myself, my Australian American Association's Brisbane Secretary Teresa Pokoj, and the AA Association's Federal & Canberra President Alicia Doherty, to attend, was greatly appreciated.

I am similarly grateful to the AA Association's Northern Territory President Bradley Torgan, for his exemplary organisation and invitation to participate in the Sinking of the "USS Peary" Commemoration Service. In addition, I extend my appreciation the AA Association Gold Coast President Carole Morris, for providing her "Front-Page Story" featured in this News Flash No 119, which details the history of the Bombing of Darwin on 19th February 1942, and to my AA Association, Brisbane - Special Projects Officer Peter Rasey for the preparation of the 2 YouTube Videos.

Yours Fraternally,



Mike Harris,
*President of Board of Directors, Life Member & Newsletter Editor,
Australian American Association, Brisbane.*

Honouring Their Courage, Endurance And Sacrifice

*Let us honour the courage, endurance and sacrifice of those who faced
hardship and danger so that we might live in freedom and peace.
Some returned home bearing lifelong scars, while others gave up their lives.
Because of them, we cherish freedom, democracy, and opportunity.
As we remember their sacrifice, we renew our commitment to unity,
compassion, and peace - protecting the freedoms they
secured for generations to come.*

Address: PO Box 340 Sunnybank QLD 4109 Web: www.aaabrisbane.com
Email: admin@aaabrisbane.com Phone: (07) 3344 1601

Final 08032026