



# Media Release

Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC  
Special Minister of State

Wednesday, 19 February 2014

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## WARTIME DEFENCE OF DARWIN HONOURED

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson, urged all Australians to honour those who defended Darwin against Japanese air raids during the Second World War.

"On 19 February 1942, seventy-two years ago today, Darwin suffered two horrifying air raids causing widespread devastation. These were followed by more than 60 further raids over the next two years, but luckily none with the same devastating result."

"The attack took Darwin by surprise, with Japanese fighters and bombers already on the horizon when air raid sirens eventually sounded. Of the ships at anchor in the harbour, three Allied naval ships and five merchant vessels were sunk and another 10 were damaged," Senator Ronaldson said.

The raids saw more than 240 people, mainly Allied service personnel and merchant seamen, lose their lives. Many more died or were injured as later raids extended to other Northern Australian towns and cities including Broome, Katherine, Wyndham, Townsville and Horn Island.

"Since 2011, 19 February has been known as 'Bombing of Darwin Day', recognising this day as the anniversary of the war coming to Australia. The bombing of Darwin marked the first time the Australian continent had been attacked during war time."

"I was proud to work with the people of the Northern Territory, and particularly the Federal Member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs MP, to secure parliamentary endorsement of the Bombing of Darwin Day ahead of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations in 2012."

The Bombing of Darwin will be marked in the Northern Territory with a commemorative service at the Adelaide River War Cemetery, the final resting place of 434 airmen, soldiers and sailors from the Second World War, some of whom died as a result of the Japanese air raids. Adjoining the war cemetery, the wartime civilian cemetery contains the graves of 63 civilians who died during the war, including a common grave for the nine Darwin Post Office personnel who were killed during the first Japanese air raid. There are 31 indigenous burials within the wartime civilian cemetery.

Soldiers from the 8th/12th Medium Regiment based in Robertson Barracks, Palmerston, have assisted the Office of Australian War Graves staff in site preparation and clean up following the recent flooding of Adelaide River while soldiers from NORFORCE based in Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin provided the ceremonial catafalque party for the service.

"It's important to recognise, that while the Australian Army completes vital work on deployments around the globe, they also play a vital role back home, helping Australians in times of need, such as during recent bushfires and flooding as we have witnessed here in the Northern Territory," Senator Ronaldson said.

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