



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 1982

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOMBING OF DARWIN

Friday, February 19, is the 40th anniversary of one of the most significant days in the history of Australia. It marks the first occasion when Australia was attacked by an external aggressor.

On the morning of 19 February 1942, Darwin was attacked by 81 Japanese aircraft carrying experienced aircrew who had participated in the devastating raid at Pearl Harbour on December 7 1941. This sudden attack on Darwin caused considerable loss and damage to Australian and allied shipping in the harbour. It also caused extensive destruction in the town itself. At 11:45 am, a second attack was made by 54 land-based Japanese bombers, concentrating on the RAAF base which was almost completely destroyed.

Total casualties from the two attacks on that morning were 243 killed and 253 wounded.

The news of this first enemy attack on home soil electrified all Australians. "The Battle of Australia has begun", warned the Sydney Morning Herald.

Special services at the Darwin Cenotaph have been arranged for tomorrow by the Lord Mayor of Darwin, Mr Cecil Black, to commemorate this important event in Australia's history. It is a day all Australians should remember.

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