

Shire of Broome
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MEDIA RELEASE



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For immediate release

Remembering the day the war came to Broome

On the morning of March 3, 1942, nine Japanese Zero fighters and a reconnaissance plane swooped down over Broome in the far north of Western Australia, killing 88 people and destroying 22 Australian, Dutch and American aircraft.

Now 70 years later, a solemn memorial service will mark this important chapter in Australia's World War II history.

This significant event included amazing tales of survival and bravery, including the shooting down from the ground of a Zero by Dutch pilot Lieutenant Gus Winckel, who will be represented in Broome by his son, Mykeljon.

Supported by the Australian, American and Dutch Governments, the Broome Returned and Services League Sub Branch and the Shire of Broome, the service will be held in Broome's Bedford Park, overlooking Roebuck Bay where the attack took place, and where the wreckage of Catalina flying boats still remain on the seabed to this day.

The memorial service will be attended by survivors of the 1942 air raid who are flying from around the world to attend, and will also feature a spectacular aviation flypast. It will be followed by a function at the Broome RSL.

On March 2, prior to the commemoration, Dutch Ambassador Willem Andreae will host a commemorative gathering in Broome to welcome Dutch survivors, their families and members of the Dutch community.

Broome RSL Sub Branch president John McCourt said the commemoration would provide an opportunity for Australian, Dutch and US veterans to pause to remember those who perished during the raids.

Mr McCourt also welcomed the planned attendance by veterans and their families from overseas and confirmation of attendance by military and political dignitaries.

"This landmark commemoration is considered of high importance, given the advancing ages of those who were in Broome at the time," Mr McCourt said.

"It is a part of Broome's history. It is a part of northern Australia's endurance in the face of an advancing enemy and it is a stark reminder of the horrors of war.

"I encourage as many local residents and visitors to come to Bedford Park to be part of this special event."

Broome Shire President Graeme Campbell said the Shire was proud to be able to commemorate the sacrifice of those who were caught up in this tragic event.

“The air raid of 1942 is an enormous chapter in the history of Broome that deserves remembrance and recognition,” Cr Campbell said.

“We especially welcome back to Broome those survivors of the events of 1942 who are returning to the scene of these horrific events, along with their families and friends.

“I would also encourage the people of Broome to make sure they attend this occasion to pay their respects to those who played such a big part in their town’s story.”

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MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

Survivors of the Broome Air Raid who are attending can be made available to media prior to the event. Historical photos and further information about the event is also available.

MEDIA CONTACT:

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