THE DARWIN BOMBING

On the 19 February 1942, Australia was attacked by Japan in what is known as the Darwin Bombing. The Japanese had devised a well planned bombing at the Darwin port in order to get to Timor, and the people and the Government reacted differently and some irrationally. The effects that resulted were catastrophic, long lasting and unforgettable, but also made the idea of war become more real for the people of Australia.

The Darwin Bombing, led by Mitsuo Fuchida, was a strategic ploy made by the Japanese to render Australia helpless. Japan planned to invade Timor, who Australia supported, but feared that if they did so, Australia would be able to send help to Timor, so it was decided they would bomb Darwin first. Darwin was a major port for all the ships, planes and forces for both Australia and the allies, and there were 45 ships at the dock at the time of the bombing. This meant that it would be easy for Japan to destroy many ships and aircrafts easily and efficiently. As shown by the comment made by Mr. A. Rudman only days after the attack, where he stated, "The raiders did not waste bombs on unimportant targets but made straight for vital spots," Japan had planned the attack well and in great detail, and it was executed as they planned. Through information received from Japanese spies in Australia, Japan also knew that if they bombed Australia, that they would get little to no retaliation or fighting back. Japan had destroyed many supplies, ships and aircraft, succeeding in their goal of ensuring that Australia did not interfere with them invading Timor. The bombing of Darwin was well planned and executed by the Japanese, and had done exactly what they wanted to do; stop Australia interfering with their plans to invade Timor.

People reacted very differently to the bombings, taking different approaches to the situation. Almost half of the people, women, children and men, went south far from the bombings, an event which was later called the "Adelaide River Stakes," while others stayed back, building shelters and learning first aid. Many servicemen left their posts, scared and confused, in panic. Some people decided to take advantage of the situation, which meant there was a lot of stealing, chaos and drunkenness. There were also a brave few servicemen and people who risked their own safety to help rescue people from burning ships and buildings, and doctors and nurses helped those they could who were injured or sick. The Australian government used their power to censor the amount of damage and lives lost, allowing only vague information to be released. There were many different statements about the amount of lives lost, some saying only

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4. loc.cit
5. loc.cit
10. loc.cit
12. loc.cit
13. loc.cit
17 people had died\(^1\), while others said as few as 2 people had died\(^2\). It was believed the government did this as they were afraid that if the true extent of damage was known, that it would rock the people’s morale\(^3\), and they saw that their unpreparedness for the war and the bombings was embarrassing\(^4\), the true extent of their lack of preparedness shown by the comment made by Allen Heckenberg, who was an ammunition loader on a plane. He stated that "We raced to the gun but it took a while to get used to it because we hadn't even fired any practice rounds."\(^5\) Many people reacted differently to the Darwin Bombing, some fleeing while others stayed back to help.

The effects of the Darwin Bombing were catastrophic, changing Darwin, and Australia, both momentarily and in the long run, changing lives forever. It is estimated that about 683 bombs were dropped\(^6\), which caused a great amount of damage to the land and properties after the Darwin Bombing, and also caused a great amount of injuries and deaths. 250 people were injured and it is believed that 300-400 people were killed\(^7\), but the exact number is not known. There was also a great amount of damage to military resources and facilities, including 77 Australian and allied planes and several ships being destroyed\(^8\). For some, the memory of the bombing is still vivid. When asked 70 years after the Darwin Bombing, Mary Lee stated that she could recall that "There was a whistling sound, then silence and then a mighty explosion and the ground shook."\(^9\) As so many facilities and resources for the military were destroyed, Darwin became temporarily neutralised\(^10\), meaning that Australia became more vulnerable\(^11\). But not all effects of the Darwin Bombing were as unpleasant and grave. The military rebuilt damaged airstrips and facilities, a railway was built from Adelaide to Alice Springs, which helped with communication and transportation between them, new military camps were set up along the main road in Darwin, and Darwin was reinforced as a base and fortress for both Australia and its allies\(^12\). The bombing also saw that the military became in control of Darwin. On 22 February 1942, The Administrator gained control over Darwin, until he left on 2 March 1945 after civil rule returned\(^13\). For many people of Australia, war was something they did not think about until the events of the bombing. The Darwin Bombing had horrific and somewhat irreversible effects on the land, as well as the people and the government, which has lasted for many years.

The Darwin Bombing was a horrific event executed by the Japanese and saw many lives lost and significant damage to both the land and its people. The people and the government reacted in many different ways, and the events of the bombings made the idea of war more real for the people of Australia.

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\(^{16}\) ibid


\(^{19}\) loc.cit

\(^{20}\) loc.cit

\(^{21}\) loc.cit

\(^{22}\) loc.cit


\(^{25}\) loc.cit

\(^{26}\) loc.cit
Source Analysis


- The key ideas are The Darwin bombing, who was involved, why it happened and what the effects were. The source helped to find valuable information about the Darwin Bombing and to answer my questions. The purpose of this source is to inform and tell the facts of the Darwin Bombing. The audience is anyone who wants to know about what happened in the Darwin Bombing. The perspective is from the Australian people's view written by the Australian government. The source was created to inform people on the Darwin Bombing. The point of view is Australia’s, the Japanese is missing as it is to inform about the effects on Australia not Japan. The author can be trusted as it is written by someone who is credited and has access to the information. The information can be trusted as it comes from legal and verified documents and reports. This information is similar to other sources.


- The key idea is the Darwin Bombing and what happened on the day. This source helped me respond to my investigation as it gave me useful information I could use in my essay. The purpose of this source is to inform me in detail about the events of the Darwin Bombing. The audience is anyone who is looking to find out about the events of the Darwin Bombing. The perspective is of an Australian person. This source was created to inform people in detail of the Darwin Bombing. The point of view is Australia’s, the Japanese is missing as it is to inform about the effects on Australia not Japan. I cannot fully trust this author. I can trust this information as it is similar to other sources and is referenced to other credible sites.
**REFERENCE LIST**


- Cameron, K, and others. 2000. *Investigating Australia’s 20th Century History.* Nelson Australia, South Melbourne


- Horner, D, and others. 1992. *When the War Came to Australia.* Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, New South Wales


