

1945.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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COMMISSION OF INQUIRY CONCERNING THE  
CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE  
ATTACK MADE BY JAPANESE AIRCRAFT AT  
DARWIN ON 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 1942.

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REPORTS BY COMMISSIONER (MR. JUSTICE LOWE), TOGETHER  
WITH OBSERVATIONS THEREON BY THE DEPARTMENTS OF  
THE NAVY, ARMY, AIR AND INTERIOR,

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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
UNDER THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY (INQUIRIES) REGULATIONS.

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IN THE MATTER OF AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE  
CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE ATTACK  
MADE BY ENEMY AIRCRAFT AT DARWIN ON  
19TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

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BEFORE HIS HONOUR MR. JUSTICE LOWE, COMMISSIONER.

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FIRST REPORT.

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## FIRST REPORT OF COMMISSIONER.

TO THE HON. THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE CO-ORDINATION :

In pursuance of the National Security (Inquiries) Regulations, I have the honour to forward to you the findings of the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the attacks made by enemy aircraft at Darwin on 19th February, 1942.

This Inquiry was referred to me in pursuance of Regulation 3 of Statutory Rule No. 35 of 1941 : "To inquire into and report on all the circumstances connected with the attacks made by enemy aircraft on Darwin on 19th February, 1942, including the preparedness of the Naval, Military, Air and Civil authorities ; the damage and casualties sustained ; the degree of co-operation existing between the various Services ; the steps taken to meet the attack or to minimize its effects ; whether the Commanders or other officers of the Naval, Military and Air Forces or any civil authority failed to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to them ; and to recommend what changes may be considered necessary in the Naval, Military, Air and Civil defence measures to meet a recurrence of an attack of this nature ".

The appointment was made on 3rd March, 1942, and at 1.30 in the early morning of 4th March, I left by plane for Darwin to enter upon the Inquiry. To assist me in my labour, Mr. J. V. Barry, K.C., and Mr. Basil Murphy (of Counsel), of Melbourne, left with me by the same plane. On Mr. Murphy becoming ill on the way to Adelaide, Mr. H. G. Alderman, of Adelaide, was appointed to take his place, and throughout the sittings at Darwin I had the assistance of Mr. Barry and, after the first day, of Mr. Alderman.

I express at once my obligation to these gentlemen for the assistance which I received. Owing to the necessary speed with which the Inquiry was initiated and proceeded, it left Melbourne without any other instructions than the somewhat conflicting accounts which had been furnished to the various Services and by them to the Government, copies of which were given to me. Had it not been for the assistance which I derived from Counsel it would have been impossible to pursue the Inquiry with the thoroughness which was at last achieved. Mr. Barry, in particular, was of assistance in the Inquiry room, while Mr. Alderman was of assistance in the collection and sifting of evidence to be presented. He also interested himself in the evacuation of the remaining civilians from Darwin in a way which I shall have occasion to refer to later in this report. In the result there is a body of evidence which I feel confident will be of the greatest use to those who seek accurate information of the occurrences inquired into. I express, too, my thanks to the shorthand writers, and to Mr. Egan, who has acted as Secretary to the Commission. They have responded promptly and ungrudgingly to the very, very heavy demands I have made on them.

The Commission sat in Darwin continuously from 5th March to the 10th March, stopping only for meals and sleep, and examining in that time approximately 70 witnesses. Moreover, the meal adjournments were often utilized in inspecting damage done in the raids. It was not possible, owing to the hours of sitting, to transcribe the shorthand notes of evidence taken in Darwin, and consequently some delay was necessary after the return of the Commission to Melbourne on 12th March. In fact, the transcription of the Darwin notes is not yet complete as this report is being dictated, even though the staff available has been working to full capacity.

The Commission resumed its sittings in Melbourne on 19th March and sat continuously since then on Court days till the 25th March, when the evidence of approximately 30 further witnesses was taken and the Inquiry adjourned *sine die*.

While at Darwin, the inspections made included both Military and non-Military buildings and installations.

In addition to oral evidence which I have heard I have also had put in evidence a vast mass of documentary evidence which I have perused.

The terms of the Commission are exceedingly wide and to interpret them in their widest sense would have involved an Inquiry into many matters which can only be properly understood by a knowledge of the political background extending over many years. I should, in any event, have been loath to enter upon such an extended Inquiry. I have no special competence to conduct such an Inquiry beyond the desire to arrive at the truth of matters according to the evidence, irrespective of whether or not it fits into any preconceived pattern ; but in any case the urgency of the matters referred to me was such, and the time limits necessarily so short, that I could not, even if I had wished, have investigated other matters.

In the result I have restricted my consideration to matters which throw light upon the raid itself, the damage arising from it, and the measures to be taken to prevent a like result following from a similar raid. But there are many indications in the evidence of this historical background affecting opinions expressed either in documents sent to the Services or the Government, or in evidence given before me, and exaggerated statements have been made which the evidence does not support. Specific illustrations appear in—

- (a) The suggestion that shipping in the harbour at the time of the raid was unduly large because of labour troubles at Darwin. With the possible exception of the *Zealandia* and the *Port Mar* there is no foundation in any evidence given before me for this allegation. Delays undoubtedly occurred and the performance of labour was often unsatisfactory, but these results seem to have been mainly due to lack of facilities in the port equipment, defects of management, and the fact that climatic conditions affected the output of labour as compared with Southern ports. Useful information on these matters appears in the evidence of Mr. A. D. McKenzie, Mr. M. P. Ryan, and the statement of the Chief Officer of the *Manunda* (Ex. T. 3), and the evidence of Captain J. P. Williams and Commander Collins.
- (b) One official report refers to an exodus of workmen from the town preceded by the Secretary of the North Australia's Workers' Union, Mr. Mick Ryan, and another states, "Every wharf labourer left the town immediately after the raids and most of them were understood to have mobbed the train which departed Thursday evening". These statements are only true in the sense that Mr. Ryan and the wharf labourers acted as the mass of the civilian population did in leaving the town, and I shall have to refer later to the lack of leadership which, in my opinion, was responsible for this conduct.
- (c) A further statement refers to the probable refusal of train crews to perform their duties and to desert. There is no truth in this statement and it was afterwards withdrawn by the person making it.

The evidence also disclosed the existence in some sections of the population of a lack of confidence in and resentment towards the Administrator. It so happened that most of the witnesses who gave evidence before me on this matter were of this section, and I feel that it is at least dangerous to draw an inference on partial evidence against the Administrator when an examination of all the relevant evidence which may well cover a lengthy period might lead to a different conclusion.

An allegation was made that the Administrator on the day of the raids and after the second raid had removed liquor and crockery and clothing from Government House by the use of police officers when the condition of affairs in the town urgently required the attendance of those police officers for the duties of preserving order. That the Administrator did order the removal of liquor is, I think, plain and indeed not disputed, but I can find no reason for criticizing his action in that respect. The cellar in which the liquor was contained was open to interference, and there were some signs of the lid having been interfered with, and in all probability if the liquor had not been removed the cellar would have been looted. Had action been taken in regard to liquor stocks in hotels in the same way or by effectively picketing it some of the disorder which followed might have been avoided. The allegation against the Administrator in regard to moving crockery on the day of the raid was emphatically denied by him and the Police Superintendent, and has not, I think, been established, although the next day or the day following that the crockery, which was Government property, was removed to Alice Springs. The only clothing which I think was removed on the 19th February was contained in certain suit-cases which were taken by Mrs. Abbott, on departing after the raid for Alice Springs.



There is one general observation in regard to the evidence which should be made: the sittings of the Commission were *in camera*, and many Service witnesses who have given or placed evidence before me were assured that the proceedings were in secret. It would be unfair, I think, to those witnesses that the evidence given by them before the Commission should be made available to others than members of the Government without their consent.

I shall now deal with the events of the 19th February, adding that the marginal references in this report are to the pages of the official transcript of the shorthand notes of the proceedings, a copy of which, when corrected, will be sent to show the foundation of this report.

### THE RAIDS.

The first raid commenced just before 10 a.m. Witnesses varied as to the precise time when the first bomb dropped, and the difficulty of determining it is increased by the strange fact that the watches of the different Services are not synchronized and actually differ. I have accepted the evidence of a witness who fixes the time as 9.58 a.m., as he particularly noted it and as he was the person to receive the first warning of the enemy approach. A number of high altitude bombers came in from the south-east of the town, flying in a "V" formation and at a height which was variously estimated by witnesses but was probably not less than 15,000 feet. One formation consisted of 27 bombers. The bombing was that which is known as pattern bombing in which the individual machines drop their bombs at a signal from the Squadron Leader. D. 338.  
M. 119.

The first bombs fell over the harbour. Having completed their run this group of bombers after a circuit returned and dropped bombs again in pattern over the town. Much difference of opinion was expressed by witnesses as to the number of machines engaged in this attack. I am inclined to think that the view of Air Marshal Williams is correct and that the number of high altitude bombers did not much (if at all) exceed 27.

After the high altitude bombers there came a number of dive bombers escorted by fighters, and these attacked the shipping in the harbour. The number of dive bombers and fighters is uncertain, but I think it probable that Air Marshal Williams is correct in his view that the total number of high altitude dive bombers and fighters did not exceed 50. The cause of confusion lies I think in the impression conveyed to witnesses that the same squadron returning for another run was an added group of enemy planes. An attack was also made about the same time by enemy machines on the Royal Australian Air Force aerodrome and on the civil aerodrome, and by machine-gun fire on the hospital at Berrima some 9 miles from the town, and in each case a good deal of damage was done which I shall presently particularize. The "All-clear" was sounded about 10.40 a.m. D. 140.

### THE DAMAGE.

(a) *On Water.*—The attack upon the harbour caused great damage to installations and shipping. The seaward limb of the pier was struck, part of the decking was destroyed, and the metal attachments (rails, &c.) completely distorted. Alongside the inner limb of the pier when the raid started were berthed the *Neptuna* and the *Barossa*. The *Neptuna* had among her cargo a quantity of explosives. She was set on fire by enemy bombs, as was also the *Barossa* on the opposite side of the pier. After the enemy planes had departed the *Neptuna* blew up and caused the destruction of a large section of the inner limb of the pier, and it is probable, too, that the *Barossa* was injured by this explosion. The damage to the pier is thus seen to be very extensive. The outer limb cannot be used and repair to the inner limb will take some months to effect. D. 140-148.

Other ships lost in addition to the *Neptuna* were the *Zealandia*, the *Meigs*, the *Maunaloa*, the *British Motorist* and the U.S.S. destroyer *Peary*. Ships damaged were the *Barossa*, the *Port Mar* (U.S.), and the hospital ship *Manunda*. The *Tulagi* was not damaged but was beached; she has since been refloated and proceeded south. In addition, two Catalina flying boats were destroyed. All these losses were in the Darwin Harbour. I have not attempted to determine in what order the enemy inflicted the damage suffered by these ships. A good deal of Military equipment and stores was lost, but the details are known to the Military authorities, and I have not attempted in this report to enumerate them.



In addition, the enemy planes on their way to or return from Darwin destroyed another Catalina flying boat and two American vessels, the *Don Isidro* and the *Florence Dee*.

(b) *Oil Tanks*.—The oil tanks suffered very little damage and relatively little oil was lost. The damage done to the tanks probably occurred from shrapnel or portions of shell casings or by fragments thrown up by the explosion of the *Neptuna*. One tank was damaged slightly at the top, another had holes pierced in it at a low level. Fortunately there was little oil in this tank at the time. However, oil did escape to the harbour and floated on its surface and took fire. Marks were visible at the time of my visit on the mangroves round the harbour of contact with this oil. Possibly some of this came from ships in the harbour which had been bombed. Whether the burning oil caused damage to other property or loss of life is uncertain, but bodies afterwards recovered showed signs of incineration.

(c) *On Land*.—On land the Administrator's office was hit by an enemy bomb and is a total loss. The front part of Government House had been affected by bomb blast, but the rear portion appears not to have been injured. The Police Barracks are a total loss, together with the Police Station and the Government Offices attached. The Post Office, the Telegraph Office, the Cable Office and the Postmaster's residence all suffered either by a direct hit or blast and are a complete loss. The Civil Hospital was much damaged and it is estimated that the cost of repairs will be in the neighbourhood of £25,000. There was some damage done to two or three private residences, which are probably also to be counted a completed loss. Some huge craters are said to have been caused by bombs of 1,050 lb. weight.

A second raid occurred about 11.55 a.m. and lasted for about 20 to 25 minutes. This raid was by upwards of 27 heavy bombers which flew at a great height and indulged in pattern bombing, more than 200 bombs being dropped according to one observer. These bombers were unescorted by fighters. This raid caused much damage to the surface of the Royal Australian Air Force Station and to the Hospital thereon. No attempt was made in the second raid to bomb the town or the port.

(d) *The Aerodrome*.—I have not sought to discriminate between the damage done on the Royal Australian Air Force Station by these two raids. The hangars and repairs shops were destroyed, the hospital damaged, and damage was also done to the hutments. The losses in aircraft were as follows:—

D. 302.

Australian—

- 6 Hudsons destroyed on the ground.
- 1 Hudson in hangar badly damaged.
- 1 Wirraway badly damaged.

American—

- 8 P.40's destroyed in the air.
- 2 P.40's destroyed on the ground.
- 1 B.24 destroyed on the ground.
- 1 P.40 damaged in the air.

On the civil aerodrome one 250-lb. G.P. bomb fell in front of the Guinea Airways hangar, which it wrecked. Three huts were also severely damaged. An ammunition dump containing approximately 300,000 rounds of .303 ammunition was destroyed, as were also a couple of small sheds, a fire engine, motor car, utility truck and one Moth aeroplane.

(e) *Railways*.—The railway line at a point 4 miles out of Darwin was damaged by the dropping of one 250-lb. G.P. bomb close to the permanent way. This was repaired in a few hours, when traffic resumed in a normal fashion. When the pier was bombed a railway engine was blown into the water and remains there. The railway lines on the pier were extensively damaged.

(f) *Other Utilities*.—No damage was done to the water supply of the town generally, though the destruction of portion of the pier destroyed with it the water and oil pipes which were attached, and water pipes on the Royal Australian Air Force aerodrome were also put out of use. The destruction of the Post Office staff put out of action the telephone system of the town, and the electric lighting system was also affected.

(g) *Observation re Shipping Losses*.—Although no evidence was given before the Commission in relation to the following ships, I am told that the information which the Navy Department has shows that the 14-ton tender *Marie* was sunk and the H.M.A.S. *Platypus* and *Swan* also suffered minor damage.



## LOSS OF LIFE.

The extent of the casualties incurred in the raids has been investigated for me with great thoroughness by Mr. Alderman, and I adopt the conclusions which he has arrived at in his inquiry. It is impossible to speak with certainty of the number of people who lost their lives, but I am satisfied that the number is approximately 250, and I doubt whether any further investigation will result in ascertaining a more precise figure.

Mr. Alderman concluded that the following were, as nearly as he could ascertain, the correct particulars of the deaths :—

<i>Neptuna</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	45
<i>Zealandia</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	3
<i>British Motorist</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
<i>Manunda</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	12
<i>Swan</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	4
<i>Karakara</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
<i>Gunbower</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
<i>Peary</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	80
<i>Meigs</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
<i>Port Mar</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
<i>Maunaloa</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
The Army	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
The Air Force	..	..	..	..	..	..	6
United States of America Army and Air Force	..	..	..	..	..	..	7
Civilians in the town	..	..	..	..	..	..	14
Civilians on the wharf	..	..	..	..	..	..	39

This gives a total of 228, but there must, I think, be added a further fifteen in respect to the deaths on the *Don Isidro*, the *Florence Dee*, and the *Catalina* flying boat destroyed between Bathurst Island and Darwin.

There was some suggestion in evidence of bodies still remaining in the mangrove swamps which border the harbour, which bodies it had not been possible to recover.

## INJURED.

Mr. Alderman satisfied himself that it was not possible to compile a complete list of those injured in the raid. The evidence before me also suggests that no accurate estimate of the injured can be obtained, but various suggestions were made, and I think that the number of 400 is probably in excess of those who sustained any substantial injury. An estimate of between 300 and 400 is probably as accurate as any that can be made.

## ACCURACY OF BOMBING.

All the evidence given before me concurred in the view that the bombing of the Japanese, especially the dive bombing, was extremely accurate. The high level bombing did not achieve the same degree of accuracy, but was moderately accurate and caused a great deal of damage. Air Force officers, however, expressed the view that there were no novel tactics displayed and that the performance of the Japanese aircraft was not beyond their expectations. All these officers insisted that the accuracy was due to lack of effective opposition by our own Forces, rather than to any specially high qualities displayed by the Japanese.

It is interesting to note that after the raid one Japanese dive bomber and one Zero fighter were discovered, which had been brought down in a condition to enable an examination to be made by our own officers.

## WARNING OF THE RAID.

There was a general consensus of opinion that the general alarm sounded preceeded the falling of the first bomb by a very short space of time, probably seconds. A warning that a large number of aircraft had been observed passing overhead at a great height over Bathurst Island and were proceeding southward, was received by the officer-in-charge of the Amalgamated Wireless Postal Radio Station at Darwin at 9.35 a.m. on the morning of the 19th February. That officer repeated the message to Royal Australian Air Force Operations at 9.37 a.m. No general alarm was given in the town until just before 10 o'clock.

D. 136.

Evidence was given before me that according to the routine usually observed, Royal Australian Air Force Operations would communicate a message to A.C.H. (Area Command Head-quarters) and that A.C.H. would communicate to Navy and Army Head-quarters. Royal Australian Air Force Operations would also, in the normal routine, communicate a message to A.R.P. Head-quarters.

D. 137.

On full consideration of the evidence, I find that the failure by Royal Australian Air Force Operations to communicate with A.R.P. Head-quarters is inexplicable. The excuse given in evidence for the delay was based upon the fact that earlier that morning a number of United States planes—P.40's had set out for Koepang and, meeting with adverse weather, had returned. Some discussion, it is said, ensued as to whether the planes referred to in the above message were the American planes returning or enemy planes, and that this discussion accounted for the greater part of the delay which ensued.

M. 135-6.

M. 146.  
D. 212.

D. 285.

I find it difficult to accept this explanation. The evidence now shows almost conclusively that most of the American P.40's had actually landed on the Royal Australian Air Force station when this message was received, and that the remainder—two or possibly three machines—had remained on patrol at some height. Moreover, the direction from which the planes were reported was not that in which the P.40's would normally be returning. In any event the Station Commander, Wing Commander Griffith, stated expressly that he did not consider that the planes flying over Bathurst Island southward might be American planes returning. Another significant fact was the jamming by the enemy of the radio telephone from Bathurst Island after the sending of the above message.

D. 32.  
D. 215.  
D. 341.

The delay in giving the general warning was fraught with disaster. It is impossible to say with certainty what would have happened if the warning had been promptly given when received by Royal Australian Air Force Operations at 9.37 a.m., but it is at least probable that a number of men who lost their lives while working on ships at the pier might have escaped to a place of safety.

D. 414.  
M. 9, 10.

There is much in the evidence, too, which suggests that a warning of twenty minutes or even of fifteen minutes might have enabled vessels in the harbour to get under way and move, and to have had a far better opportunity of avoiding the enemy attack than that which in fact they had. A twenty-minutes warning might also have enabled the officials at the Post Office who were killed to have gone to a place of safety.

D. 7.

D. 133.

The warning received by way of Bathurst Island was not the only warning received. Military Head-quarters received a separate warning through an observation post at 9.50 a.m., and there is evidence that Navy Head-quarters were notified, possibly from A.C.H., at 9.45 a.m.

Much evidence was given in an attempt to fix the precise responsibility for the delay in giving the general alarm, and in tracing the actual communications which passed from Royal Australian Air Force Operations to other quarters. I have felt that time cannot usefully be spent in the circumstances in determining this matter, but it is plain that the Station Commander must take some responsibility for the failure of action on the part of Royal Australian Air Force Operations.

There is other evidence to indicate that this particular Service was conducted with some laxity. No log book was kept before 6th February, 1942, and the log book kept after that date discloses a gap in the entries between 16th and 20th February, 1942.

#### MEANS OF DEFENCE TO THE ENEMY RAID.

D. 20.  
D. 144.  
D. 198.  
D. 390.

M. 135.

The only defence to the enemy raid over the harbour and over the town was by means of anti-aircraft guns and such defence as the ships in the harbour possessed. There was no defence by air. The evidence before me was all to the effect that the anti-aircraft batteries operated efficiently and that the personnel of the A.M.F. performed very creditably in their baptism of fire. Their earlier shooting seemed somewhat short of the planes at which they were firing, but later their range was better and the defence became effective. The ships in the harbour defended themselves vigorously but with little success in most cases. At the Royal Australian Air Force Station, the American P.40's which were grounded attempted to take off and to attack the Japanese planes. They were, without exception, shot down. Thereafter the only defence offered was by means of anti-aircraft fire.

D. 315.

Shortly prior to the raid the anti-aircraft guns had been re-sited and the new arrangement was effective in driving off the attack from three Hudsons on the ground, and these were saved.



## DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY.

There is no very clear evidence as to the damage sustained by the enemy. The best estimate I can make is that the enemy lost five planes certainly and probably five others. It was stated by Air Commandore Wilson that the Tokyo Radio Station had broadcast that the Japanese had lost 23 planes in the attack. Apart from this I do not know the origin of such a statement, and I am far from satisfied that the Japanese loss was so high. D. 91.  
D. 303.

## BASES FROM WHICH ATTACK CAME.

The evidence of competent witnesses was that the heavy bombers came from Ambon and that the fighters and dive bombers were carrier-borne. D. 94.  
M. 79.

## CONDITIONS WHICH DEVELOPED AFTER THE RAIDS.

(a) *The Town.*—Immediately following the raids, the morale of the townspeople was not noticeably affected, and there is evidence to show that nothing in the nature of panic then developed. Had there been effective leadership at that stage I think that normal conditions might very rapidly have been attained, but leadership was conspicuously lacking. Prior to the raid evacuation had been widely discussed. Very quickly rumours began to be spread and were readily believed. Houses were abandoned in haste. I myself observed in the Darwin Hotel tables upon which drinks remained half-consumed, letters started but not finished, papers strewn about, beds unmade in bedrooms, and other signs of a very hasty exit. In other places I saw similar conditions. In one there were indications of a mail but partially opened. D. 38-40.  
D. 393.  
D. 395.

By the middle of the afternoon people were seeking to leave the town by every means available. There is some evidence before me that officers of the police told civilians that the town was being evacuated. There is other evidence that at least one police officer said that martial law had been proclaimed and that the police must act under Military authority. A long string of vehicles drew up at a petrol station for the purpose of obtaining petrol for cars about to depart for the south. The Administrator, learning this, forbade the supply of petrol. Actually by some means many vehicles did proceed towards the south. Many people proceeded on foot, and others on bicycles. Even the Municipal sanitary carts were pressed into service and for some days the town was without a sanitary service. The foreign element in the population was prominent in the attempt to escape. Business houses were closed and the civil life of the town practically ceased. D. 202.  
D. 255.  
D. 328.  
M. 240.  
D. 257.  
D. 255.

On the night of the 19th looting broke out in some of the business premises, and sporadic looting occurred thereafter even to the time when the Commission was sitting in Darwin. This looting was indulged in both by civilians and members of the Military Forces. It is hard to believe that, if proper supervision had been exercised throughout, such looting could have gone on. D. 164.  
D. 328.  
D. 353-4.

The Administrator arranged for a Provost Company to assist the police in the duties of keeping order in the town, but I am satisfied that the Administrator was not fully acquainted with the conditions which were developing and the telegrams which he sent to the Minister for the Interior failed to give any adequate idea of those conditions. In my opinion, this condition of affairs was largely due to the fact that there had been no adequate foresight of what might result after an enemy raid, and consequently no plans made for the rapid resumption of normal conditions when the raid ceased. There had been an unfortunate difference between the Administrator and the A.R.P. organization in January. I am not in a position, without much further investigation than I was able to make, to come to a conclusion whether the charges of apathy urged against the Administrator in relation to A.R.P. had as much foundation as the witnesses asserted, but at least I am clear that this difference prevented the police being aided by officers of the A.R.P. in preserving law and order after the raid.

I ought to draw attention in making these criticisms of the Administrator's conduct to the fact that he applied to be represented by Counsel before me so that there might be a skilled defence by him to any charges made against him. I felt unable, for the reasons which appear in the transcript, to grant this request, but it is proper, if any action is suggested to the Minister because of this criticism, to remember that the Administrator has not been heard by Counsel. M. 233.

On Saturday, 21st February, the Commandant of the 7th Military District appointed Major Anderson as Town Major, and thenceforward the town has been governed in accordance with the directions of the Military Commandant. The absence



D. 353.  
D. 376.

of ordinary civil life in Darwin now makes it comparatively unimportant to draw attention to two complaints which emerged in the evidence in regard to protection trenches. Police officers complained that no slit trenches were available for their use in case of raids, and townspeople protested that no general trenches were available for their use. I think the criticism in each case is well founded and that both police and civilians might reasonably expect to have such trench accommodation.

Immediately following the raid the women who remained in Darwin, with the exception of hospital nurses, were evacuated. There remained about 1,100 male civilians, of whom it was anticipated some 400 might be absorbed for the purpose of carrying out necessary works. These civilians were placed in camps and supplied with food by the Military authorities. The responsibility for their evacuation lay, I think, after the 21st February at the latest, with the Military authorities. I am not fully acquainted with all the obstacles which lay in the way of their evacuation, but they had not been evacuated up till 10th March. Complaint having been made to me by some of them, Mr. Alderman was good enough to visit them on my behalf, and his effort seemed to have been at once effective. On 10th March upwards of 200 were evacuated by train, and since then others—to a number with which I am not acquainted—have been evacuated. It is possible that Mr. Alderman's intervention and the result which followed were mere coincidence, but I cannot help suspecting that he introduced a degree of energy which had previously been lacking.

(b) *The Air Station.*—The effects of the raid at the Air Station were extremely serious. Much damage had been done, and the personnel, most of whom were experiencing enemy attack for the first time, were shaken by the attack. But at that stage (I am convinced) with competent leadership the personnel would rapidly have resumed their duties.

D. 307-315.

An order, however, was given by the Station Commander, which I think was extremely unfortunate. He directed that the men should gather in order to be fed at a point half a mile down the road from the aerodrome and half a mile into the bush. The men were not paraded in sections when this order was given, nor indeed were they brought together at all. The order was passed by the Station Commander to Squadron-Leader Swan, and was by him to be passed to the subordinate officers and by them to the men.

D. 222.

What happened in the result was that the order was completely distorted and by repetition ultimately reached the men in various forms. Some men stated that they were ordered to go 3 miles, others 7 miles, and others 11 miles. Many of the men simply took to the bush. Some were found as far afield as Batchelor, some at Adelaide River, one was found at Daly Waters, and another, by an extreme feat, reached Melbourne in thirteen days.

The Air Station itself was practically deserted. For several days afterwards men were straggling back to the Station, and at a parade on 23rd February, the muster showed 278 men missing. As the casualties were very small, the result can only be regarded as deplorable.

M. 86-87.

I saw some of the men when giving evidence before me, and I am satisfied, both from their appearance and what I heard from officers, that the quality of the men was not unsatisfactory, but that the failure arose owing to lack of training and lack of leadership at the relevant time. I regard this condition of affairs as being very serious. What happened at Darwin might well be repeated in other parts of the Commonwealth, unless there is a true appreciation of the causes which led to this exodus from the Air Station. I also had evidence that somewhat similar conditions had arisen after attacks in Malaya, Rabaul and Koepang.

D. 227.

Competent officers who gave evidence before me drew my attention to the fact that most of the personnel concerned were non-flying men—cipher officers, equipment officers, artisans and the like. It was suggested that these men were chosen for their technical skill and received their promotion on account of technical proficiency. There was no guarantee that such men were capable of leadership, and that in time of crisis it might be shown—as it was at Darwin—that qualities of leadership were missing in many such men.

M. 188.

In addition I was told that these men were scarcely at all trained in the use of arms. There is evidence that some of those who took to the bush remarked that they did not know how to use arms and were not going to remain to be massacred in the event of a Japanese landing.



I am willing to believe, as Air Vice-Marshal Bostock testified, that much of the trouble has been due to the very rapid expansion of the Air Force since the outbreak of war, but I cannot help feeling that there is much force in the criticism that has been made. The evidence referred to at least suggests whether some training on the lines of infantry training is not called for.

The position in other respects is, I think, not incapable of remedy and the method of correction was indicated by an Air officer of high rank who impressed me by his ability and the breadth of his outlook.

This officer attributed the result to the absence of preliminary exercises by the Station Commander in aerodrome defence measures in which definite duties were assigned to each of the personnel. The taking of such precautions and the practising of the personnel beforehand in what they must do in the event of a raid would, in his opinion, largely prevent a recurrence of such unfortunate conduct. This is an opinion in which I understand Air Vice-Marshal Bostock to concur. Such pre-vision and practice were conspicuously absent at the Darwin Air Station. M. 87.  
M. 189.

#### FIFTH COLUMN ACTIVITY.

One matter to which I was asked to direct my attention was whether there was reason to believe that the raids had in any way been assisted by enemy action within Australia itself. Up to almost the last day of the sittings, I should have had to answer this question with a plain negative, because all the witnesses to whom that question was put agreed that there was no foundation for such a suggestion. On the last day but one of the sittings in Melbourne, however, evidence was given which I think cannot be disregarded though it may still leave unchanged a negative answer as to these raids. I was told that meteorological balloons had been found in the vicinity of the aerodrome at Darwin. Similar balloons had been noted at Port Moresby concurrently with a raid upon that town. Their purpose is to indicate air currents in the upper air so as to guide the pilot of a bomber in the operation of his bomb release. M. 94-5.

At Port Moresby the matter was immediately investigated, and the release was found to be almost certainly due to the presence of Japanese. The discovery of similar balloons at Darwin led to observation being made, the result of which was that messages in Japanese morse were detected both outwardly and after a lapse of 40 minutes inwardly towards a point in the direction of Daly Waters. These facts, coupled with the disappearance from Darwin on the outbreak of war of Japanese then residing there, who have not since been traced, furnishes at least a suspicion that there is activity in the neighbourhood of Darwin which may be not unconnected with the raids which took place.

#### ATTACK ON HOSPITALS AND HOSPITAL SHIP.

During the course of the raid the civil hospital in Darwin, the Military hospital at the Royal Australian Air Force Station, the hospital at Berrima, and the hospital ship *Manunda* in the harbour were all injured. The question has arisen as to whether the attacks on these hospital installations were deliberate or accidental.

In regard to the Darwin hospital and the hospital at the Royal Australian Air Force Station, there is no conclusive reason to suppose that the attacks were deliberate. The attack on the civil hospital may well have been made by mistake for the Larrakeyah Barracks, which it resembles to some degree in appearance, and for which it might reasonably be mistaken from the air. Royal Australian Air Force officers were of opinion that the damage done to the hospital at the Air Station was accidental. The hospital lay at the edge of portion of the Station which was pattern bombed, and the general opinion was that the bombing had not been intended for the hospital and that injury to it was accidental. D. 13.  
D. 301.

At Berrima there is also ground to think that the hospital was so close to Military installations that it may have been injured without design. D. 40.  
M. 222.

In regard to the hospital ship *Manunda*, the position is a little different. The ship escaped a direct hit from the high level bombers and from most of the dive bombing attack. Observers were of opinion that this escape was intended and that the accuracy of the Japanese bombing was sufficiently high to have enabled them to have hit the *Manunda* if they had so intended. But there is undoubted evidence that the last of the dive bombers did deliberately attack the *Manunda* and that the greatest damage which ensued both to the vessel and to the personnel was caused by this last attack. D. 147.



## INSTALLATIONS AVOIDED BY THE JAPANESE.

It may not be inappropriate here to remark that there was a large body of opinion expressed before me that the Japanese had deliberately refrained from attacking the oil tanks, the floating dock and the water supply and that, had they wished to destroy any of these installations, they could in the absence of air opposition—which existed on that day—have easily effected their purpose. It is unnecessary to dilate upon the inference that is to be drawn from this abstention on the part of the Japanese. It will be appreciated no doubt that if the opinion of these witnesses is sound, such abstention holds a grave threat of later enemy action against Darwin.

## PREPAREDNESS OF THE SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE RAID.

M. 73.

M. 73-4.

(a) *The Navy*.—The rapid advance of the Japanese eastward through the Dutch East Indies was known to all the Services, and all realized that, from the time Timor, Ambon and Koepang were occupied, the danger of an attack upon Darwin was increased. About the 27th January, 1942, the presence of at least one aircraft carrier had been reported in the Flores Sea. There was information on 17th February, that four aircraft carriers were known to be in the Celebes area. A convoy had set out from Darwin for Koepang on 16th February and had been repeatedly attacked while at sea and had been ordered to return to port. Japanese aircraft had been reported over Darwin on the 16th February, and two aircraft were over Bathurst Island on the afternoon of the 18th February. An American freighter, *Don Isidro*, had been attacked north of Wesel Island, at the extreme north-east of Arnhem Land, about midday on the 18th February. In these circumstances it appeared extremely likely that an attack on Darwin would not be long delayed.

D. 177.

M. 3.

Captain Thomas, the Senior Naval Officer at Darwin, anticipated that such an attack would take place. The Navy, in my opinion, had taken all proper steps in preparation for such an attack. It is possible in the light of events which followed to criticise the disposition of the ships in the harbour, and to suggest that they would have been safer if they had been more dispersed, and to suggest that in regard to the hospital ship it should have been placed far away from transports and vessels of war; but this I think is to be wise after the event. The Captain of the *Mamunda* has expressly stated that he was satisfied with the location accorded to his ship. There was no suggestion before me from any responsible witness that at the time the disposition was made it was in any wise improper. I can add no further useful comment in regard to the Navy. But I draw attention to the opinion of Captain Williams as to ships being anchored with not more than 15 feet of water beneath the keel where practicable so as to make salvage more practicable in case of loss.

(b) *The Military Forces*.—The only part of the Military Forces required for action in the raid itself were the anti-aircraft equipment and personnel; as I have already indicated in an earlier part of this report, the conduct of the personnel is to be highly commended. The equipment was properly employed during the raid, but there is reason to believe that had the anti-aircraft equipment been more extensive, better results might have been obtained.

D. 204.

The officer in command of the anti-aircraft defences gave evidence that his gun density averaged six, but he drew my attention to the Manual of Anti-aircraft Defence, Volume 2, published by the War Office in London in 1941, where in Pamphlet No. 1, page 28, paragraph 1 (3), it was laid down that where any place is a vital area of major importance a 36-gun density should be obtained. I realize that it is a matter for the High Command to determine whether Darwin is a vital area of major importance. I realize also that problems of supply may be involved; but this evidence suggests that the gun density of Darwin was not as high as it should have been.

D. 81.

(c) *The Air Force*.—The Darwin Air Station is within the command of the north-west area. On 19th February, the officer commanding that area was Air Commodore Wilson. He had been appointed to his position about the end of January, but at the time of the air raid was visiting ABDACOM on official business in order to consult with General Brett. I do not think that his conduct comes into question in relation to this raid, although I think that the opinion expressed by him that the possibility of a raid upon Darwin during his absence was remote was unduly optimistic.

During his absence, Group Captain Scherger acted in command of the north-west area. He was present in Darwin on the day of the raid and acted, in my opinion, with great courage and energy. I desire to record the view that, on all the



evidence before me, his conduct in connexion with the raid was deserving of the highest praise. Another officer whose conduct during and after the raid merits commendation is Squadron Leader Swan.

The officer in command of the Darwin Station was Wing-Commander Griffith. He also has had but a short period of service at Darwin, coming there about the beginning of February. The Station itself had been laid out according to plans made some five years before which, of course, did not embody war experience.

The layout of the Station was little suited to meet such an attack as came on 19th February. The buildings were not dispersed and they furnished an excellent target for raiding aeroplanes. Not much had been done in the way of providing inserts or pens on the perimeter of the Station for aircraft, and practically nothing had been done by way of camouflage. Possibly the cause of this was, as Air Vice-Marshal Bostock suggested, labour difficulties at Darwin which prevented work from being carried out, but that is a matter which I have not fully investigated and upon which I express no final opinion. What is certain is that lessons taught by the war in Crete, Malta and Malaya, and by German practice, have not been incorporated in the Station. These lessons were known to many officers of the Royal Australian Air Force and the memorandum No. 3 of 20th August, 1941, from the Directorate of Air Intelligence contains much information on the subject.

It was agreed by expert witnesses that the Darwin aerodrome was substantially similar to that at Sembawang near Singapore, at which the aerodrome was under continuous Japanese attack over a period of two months and from which 80 aircraft operated continuously; during that period only seven aircraft were lost on the ground, and out of 1,200 personnel engaged on the Station only twenty casualties took place. This is a striking illustration of how losses may be kept down when the Station is properly organized and the aircraft properly dispersed. M. 67.

\* It is probably unfair to attribute blame for this lack of organization and dispersal wholly to the Commander of the Station whose service there had been so short, but, in my opinion, the condition of the Station was a prime factor in the extent of the losses which followed. The Station was not equipped with any fighter aircraft under its control on the day of the raid. It was a mere accidental circumstance that American fighter aircraft P.40's, had returned from Koepang, and owing to the circumstances of their being in course of taking off when the raid occurred, they were of no substantial protection to the Station. The ground defences, too, were on the evidence before me insufficient, though this insufficiency was probably due to the inability to obtain the necessary supplies.

In another respect I regard this Station as unprepared on the 19th February, to meet any hostile raid. It is essential in order to use the defence equipment available that early warning be obtained of enemy approach. Three methods of warning are in use by other belligerents; (1) Radio Location; (2) Air Observer System, and (3) Wireless Intelligence Units for interception and direction-finding of enemy aircraft and signal traffic. M. 68.

None of these three methods was in operation at this Station. It is, of course, true there was a wireless telephone service from Bathurst Island to the Amalgamated Wireless Station which was available to inform Royal Australian Air Force Operations, but this service was not under the control of the Air Force. I shall have to revert to these matters at a later stage of this report, but it is obvious from what has been said that the Air Station was ill-prepared to resist the raids on 19th February. The desirability of installing radio location at Darwin had been discussed by the Radio Physics Research Board of which the Chiefs of the Staff were members as early as November, 1940, and again in August and September, 1941. An installation of the type used in Great Britain was at all these times available but it was only on the last date that a decision was taken to erect another unit, which was described in evidence as "make shift" at Darwin. But even then the question of implementing the decision was apparently treated with a leisureliness out of keeping with the urgency of the occasion. M. 180.

(d) *The Civil Authorities.*—What I have already said indicates that I feel the Civil Authorities were lacking in foresight in not envisaging the possible conditions which would follow upon an air raid. The result was that no plan had been formed to deal with conditions such as those which arose. The absence of planning was, in my opinion, largely responsible for the subsequent disorganization. It is not an easy thing to improvise successfully measures to meet such a situation, and the attempt

to do so in this case was inadequate and a failure. If the Civil Authorities found themselves insufficiently equipped to meet the situation, I think the Administrator should have, at an earlier stage than he did, sought the aid of the Military Authorities.

#### CO-OPERATION EXISTING BETWEEN THE VARIOUS SERVICES.

Ex. R. 1.

There had been in existence, for a considerable time before the raid, a Committee described as the Darwin Defence Co-ordinating Committee. I have perused the minutes of that body, which meets normally fortnightly, and sometimes more frequently. So far as I am able to judge from the minutes and from the evidence I have heard, it has adequately discussed matters necessary to be discussed to ensure co-operation of the Services. There was nothing in the circumstances of the raid of the 19th February which called for co-operation between the Services except in relation to the use of the anti-aircraft units in support of the Air Force and the communication of warnings received. There was no failure of co-operation in relation to the anti-aircraft support. I have already dealt with the question of communication of warning received.

In meeting the conditions in the town arising out of the raid, co-operation between the Civil and Military Authorities was called for. I am of opinion that this co-operation was afforded at too late a stage. The evidence does not enable me to determine whether this lateness arose from delay of the Administrator in requesting co-operation or of the Military in affording it. It is a matter the possibilities of which should be discussed in advance and plans should be prepared ready for operation.

I am asked also to report on the steps taken to minimize the effect of an attack upon Darwin. Much of what I have said affords information on this matter. The Army had co-operated with the Civil Authorities in the preparation of a plan for A.R.P. which, so far as I can judge, was well-calculated to carry out its purpose. Unfortunately, however, this plan was not implemented but was modified by action taken by the Administrator late in December, 1941. The evidence does not enable me to determine whether the Administrator's view that this modification was rendered necessary by change of circumstances which had arisen, is correct or not.

#### CHANGES NECESSARY IN ORDER TO ENSURE DEFENCE AGAINST A RECURRENCE OF ATTACKS SUCH AS OCCURRED ON THE 19TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

In the forefront I would suggest for the consideration of the Government, whether unified control of the Services at Darwin would not afford a better defence than the separate control of each Service. The references to this point in the evidence are so slight that I cannot base any useful opinion on them, but the matter is one which I suggest is well worthy of consideration.

In regard to Naval Defences, I have no recommendation to make. This so clearly depends upon the general Naval position, which is far beyond the range of the Inquiry I conducted, that any recommendation by me would be of little value.

In regard to the Military establishment, I merely draw attention to what I have already said about anti-aircraft defence and gun density.

D. 54.  
D. 183.  
D. 218.

The position in regard to Air Defence stands on a different footing. All the expert evidence called before me agreed in the view that, without adequate air defence, Darwin could not be defended against the danger of a recurrence of these raids. Moreover, to ensure the proper use of such air force as Darwin has, it is essential that there should be early warning of impending enemy attacks. For this purpose, the main requirement is sufficient units for radio location. It would be all the better if such a warning system were supplemented by an air observer system and the existence of a wireless intelligence interception service.

D. 109.  
D. 216.

I was informed, while at Darwin, that one radio location unit had been erected and was undergoing tests, and would shortly be in operation, but I found in witnesses who gave evidence some confusion as to the results which would be achieved by the use of one unit. The opinion seemed to be held that one unit operated by sufficiently trained personnel who were sufficiently alive to their duty in detection, would afford warning of any approaching enemy aircraft. This view is erroneous and I would draw attention to evidence which was given before me by members of the Radio Physics Research Board. In the operation of a radio location unit, a beam is directed from a transmitting station which may be rotated through the arc of a circle. The beam so



directed will reach any object within its range, and be reflected back to the transmitting station. Any object beyond the range of the beam will, of course, not be detected. Radio location in practice is by no means 100 per cent. efficient and in order to approximate to efficiency, one needs a number of radio locational set-ups.

M. 34.

Sir John Madsen, who gave this evidence, added that a convenient analogy to the operation of radio location may be found in the operation of a searchlight; objects which do not come within the range of the searchlight will not be detected. Similarly objects which do not come within the range of the radio beam will not be detected. The analogy breaks down in this respect—that in dealing with a searchlight it may be operated both in a horizontal and in a vertical direction, whereas the normal operations of radio location will be in one direction only.

M. 37.

This view was accepted by Dr. Martyn with the qualification that he said the radio location unit, in addition to putting out a beam in a horizontal plane, puts out, simultaneously, a large number of beams in a vertical plane, and that the operation was like that of a searchlight with a large number of lights all in one vertical plane, which move horizontally, so that there are 1, 6, 8 or 10 beams, making it more difficult for a plane to fly through undetected.

M. 38.

Both of these witnesses pointed out that in Great Britain a number of units of radio location were used in conjunction, and that one or a number of units were used for heights below, say, 1,000 feet, and another, or others, for heights above 1,000 feet, and that there were chains of such units acting in conjunction. These facts are the foundations for the suggestion made in my telegraphic interim report of the 6th March, that two additional installations be made at Darwin. Such units are erected on what is called an "array", which extends considerably above the surface of the ground; for example, 250 or 300 feet, and these are prominent objects on the landscape. These are not easy to camouflage, and form a somewhat easy object of attack for enemy aircraft. It is this which is the foundation for the suggestion in the interim report for four or five dummy installations. Enemy planes would not easily discriminate between the dummy and the actual installations and there would be a greater chance of the real installation surviving.

Wireless Intelligence Units are used in all enemy belligerent forces. These units are not necessarily based in the locality to be protected, but their object is to intercept messages sent out by the enemy, to interpret them and use the information obtained for our own benefit. One difficulty of such a system is that the Japanese use their own Morse Code. I was told that to train an officer in this system would take at least three months, but it is obvious that the sooner this task is taken in hand, the sooner we will be in a position to operate the system.

The Air Force has no observer system, but makes use of the Navy's services for coast watching. It is probable, however, that the local conditions at Darwin make it impracticable to have a local observer system in connexion with the Air Force there.

My interim report emphasized the necessity of the provision of fighter squadrons for the defence of Darwin. I took much evidence after the date of that report from officers of high rank, and I found none who disagree with the view that it is essential for aerial defence of Darwin to have fighter squadrons. These, of course, must have adequate ground organization and defence, and there must be proper dispersion of the aircraft to prevent, or at least minimize, loss on the ground.

My interim report suggested that four fighter squadrons were necessary. Opinions expressed after the 6th March generally supported this view. Some witnesses thought that even a greater number was necessary, whilst the lowest figure expressed was two fighter squadrons.

I am, of course, not ignorant that questions of supply may render the provision of the numbers recommended impracticable, or that considerations of high policy may require the use of such fighter squadrons as exist in other areas. My recommendation has regard to the question submitted to me of what is necessary.

I also repeat the recommendation of my interim report that sufficient reconnaissance aircraft should be available to maintain a reasonably sufficient seaward patrol. Aircraft of sufficient range to observe what the enemy is doing beyond Timor is, for instance, not available, and it needs no emphasis to realize that timely knowledge that an invasion fleet was assembling in that area would be invaluable. In addition to the dispersal of aircraft at the Darwin Station, measures to camouflage them adequately are necessary. Moreover, a better provision for anti-aircraft defence is necessary—more light automatics, Vickers Mark I. guns, and anti-aircraft artillery—

3.7 guns or similar guns should be provided. The precise number of such additions and siting of such guns is a matter for expert consideration, on which I am not fully informed.

There are some observations in conclusion, which I wish to make. A prisoner in the Fanny Bay Gaol, Sinclair by name, was released with others during the raid. He had had experience of first-aid work, and according to all witnesses, performed magnificent service in the town in the treatment of the wounded. On the conclusion of this work, he reported back to the gaol, and was told that he had been released. Since the day of the raid he has performed further excellent service in Darwin, helping the police and the A.R.P. organization. His sentence still had some months to run when he was released. In view of his conduct, I recommend him for a pardon.

Many acts of heroism were performed by individuals on the ships in the harbour, and on the land, particularly by the nurses in the hospital. To discriminate would be invidious, but I wish to record the fact that evidence of their conduct was brought before me.

I was conscious of the fact that useful information might be given to me by officers of the United States of America Forces based upon Darwin. In fact, Commander Collins, Naval Observer, did give evidence which is recorded in the transcript, but attempts to get evidence from Captain Connolly, of the American Air Force, and from Brigadier-General Hurley proved, in the result, unsuccessful.

Lastly, I should add that I have felt so impressed with the urgency of reporting immediately that I feel there may be matters upon which, after a more leisurely review of the evidence, I can add to this report. I am, therefore, not formally returning my Commission but will, if necessary, add a supplementary report to this.

(Sgd.) CHARLES J. LOWE,  
Commissioner.

27th March, 1942.

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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

UNDER THE

NATIONAL SECURITY (INQUIRIES) REGULATIONS.

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IN THE MATTER OF AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE  
CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE ATTACK  
MADE BY ENEMY AIRCRAFT AT DARWIN ON  
19TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

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BEFORE HIS HONOUR Mr. JUSTICE LOWE, COMMISSIONER.

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FURTHER AND FINAL REPORT.

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## FURTHER AND FINAL REPORT OF COMMISSIONER.

TO THE RIGHT HON. THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE CO-ORDINATION :

Having now perused the transcript of the evidence taken at Darwin, I have the honour to make this supplementary and final report upon the attacks made by enemy aircraft at Darwin on the 19th February, 1942.

### SCOPE OF THIS REPORT.

The broad picture presented by my earlier report remains unaltered, but the perusal of the transcript leads me to think that in three respects further matters should be brought to the attention of the Government.

These matters concern—

- (a) Further details of matters already reported upon.
- (b) Additional matters which I think it proper to bring to the Government's notice ; and
- (c) Certain recommendations under each of the foregoing heads which during the course of the Inquiry I was requested to make.

### FURTHER DETAILS OF MATTERS REPORTED UPON.

(a) *Naval Installations and Equipment.*—One of the ships present in Darwin Harbour on the day of the raid was H.M.A.S. *Platypus*. She is a repair ship manned at the time by a complement of 25 to 30 ; her full complement reached a much higher figure. Acting-Commander Tonkin gave evidence that there was not sufficient equipment on the ship to enable the full complement of the vessel to get safely away if the ship were sunk. In addition, he said that the ship required further guns to give it adequate protection. He suggested that six of the Oerlikon type and also Breda guns were required to attain that object. In his view, unless the ship were adequately armed there was grave danger that she would be destroyed and not be able to discharge her function of repair ship. No other repair ship is available at Darwin. D. 584-5.

(b) *Pier.*—Much evidence was given that the pier before its destruction was quite insufficient for the handling of shipping under war-time conditions. The main report has indicated the damage which was done to this pier and an indication was given of the time requisite for the repair of the pier.

I had expert evidence to the effect that it was unwise to repair this pier and that it would be a better course to construct a fresh pier from that part of the harbour where the boom defences now are. D. 611.

In view of the possibility of Darwin being used as a base for offensive action at a later stage, this opinion is one to which the Government may wish to give consideration.

(c) *Oil Pipes.*—I drew attention in my Report to the destruction of the oil pipes which were attached to the pier. There was evidence before me that it would be unwise to attempt to repair these oil pipes and that it would be better to adopt the practice which is in existence in many parts of the world of taking the oil pipe under the water to a buoy in the harbour and there supplying ships. This suggestion seems to me to involve the added benefit that there would be less danger to pipes so placed from a further bombing raid.

(d) *Minesweeping Equipment.*—The Naval Commandant at Darwin drew my attention to the danger of destruction to minesweeping equipment from the lack of aircraft at Darwin. I quote from his evidence as the most effective way of emphasizing the point he made. He said : On the 5th March—

. . . . I received a report from the *Deloraine* to the effect that she was being bombed by enemy aircraft and required assistance. Application was made to A.C.H. (Area Combined Head-quarters) in the normal manner for this assistance within five minutes of the attack commencing. There were enemy fighter aircraft in the air. I was informed by A.C.H. that no fighter aircraft were available in Darwin to render assistance to the *Deloraine* and she got none. She was not damaged by a hit but there were some very near misses which were sufficiently close to put out of action the anti-submarine detection apparatus. D. 106.

It was purely accidental that the ship was not either sunk or severely damaged and put out of action until replacement parts were obtained from the south. This ship happened to be the only ship in northern or north-western Australian waters fitted with the necessary apparatus for sweeping the magnetic and acoustic mine.

(e) *Royal Australian Air Force*.—In my Report I drew attention to the disorganization which occurred on the Darwin Station after the raids. It is important, I think, also to call attention to some of the results which, as the evidence disclosed, followed from this disorganization. I have mentioned that certain Hudson machines were not damaged in the raid.

D. 223. (f) *Effects of Disorganization*.—(1) *Inability to Use Aircraft*.—A senior officer gave evidence that six times during the afternoon he endeavoured to get these Hudsons into the air in order to search out the whereabouts of the enemy aircraft carrier and to attack it. Owing to the disorganization existing, he was completely unable to get a communication to the necessary quarter. This was largely due to the fact that the Station Commander was unable to organize a ground-to-air wireless link at a time when the organizing of such communication was vital.

The same officer expressed the opinion that at that time the Station Commander was rattled and did not know which were the first things and which were the second things.

D. 223. (2) *Salvage not Attempted*.—Moreover, no attempt was made to salvage equipment and material from the hangars or to salvage stores although in the opinion of competent witnesses such salvage was possible.

D. 506. (3) *Emergency Water Supply Not Used*.—The water main laid on to the station was damaged in the raid, but to meet such a contingency an emergency water service was in existence from an elevated tank with the necessary reticulation. When it was attempted to use this during the raid, it was found to be chained and locked with a yale lock, and in the result it proved impossible in the time to make use of this emergency service.

D. 115. (g) *Necessity for Mechanical Aid in Filling In*.—I have pointed out that the pattern bombing of the enemy raiders during the second raid caused considerable damage to the surface of the station, and many bomb craters were left thereon. Ultimately these craters were filled and the surface restored by hand labour. Air Commodore Wilson emphasized the need of mechanical aid for this purpose and suggested that with the aid of bulldozers the work could have been done very much quicker and the Station brought more readily into use again.

D. 317. (h) *Necessity for Aircraft Spares*.—Air Commodore Wilson also drew my attention to the necessity of providing spares for the Hudson machines and suggested that the request for such spares should be urged with as much energy as possible.

D. 117. (j) *Radio Location*.—Since making my Report, I have had placed before me by Dr. Stanner of the personal staff of the Minister for the Army two memoranda dealing with the means of supply of equipment for radio location. These memoranda urge with considerable force the desirability of erecting a single factory for the provision of this equipment. I have not otherwise investigated the matter, but it seems to me that with the necessity for the use of such equipment for the Air Force and, possibly also, for the Army and Navy the suggestion is one worthy of prompt examination.

(k) *Warning of Impending Raids*.—The importance of early warning was fully emphasized in my report, but perusal of the transcript and further consideration of the question leads me to suggest that it is desirable that the person receiving a warning should report immediately to an officer with power to take decisions. Had such a course been followed in relation to the warning received from Bathurst Island, I think it very probable that a general alarm would have been sounded much earlier.

(l) *Common Telephone Circuit Recommended*.—It is also desirable, I think, if the matter has not since been attended to, that there should be a common telephone circuit to be operated by the officer who takes such decision, or under his direction, to all branches of the Services and to A.R.P. Head-quarters. In the operation of such a circuit warning will be given simultaneously to each point on the circuit, and the time necessary for separate warnings will be eliminated.

On this point I quote from the evidence of a competent witness—

Q. What do you suggest?

A. Simple Control. The representative must be qualified to adequately instruct the representatives of the different Services including the civil services and the A.R.P., and they must have a direct line to every point so that they can be notified immediately. There is a frightful duplication in the receipt and handling of information.

The witness added that a friend of his closely in touch with Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies had attributed as one of the chief factors of our failure there the lack of prompt communication and the lack of unification of control. Too many people, he said, handled one subject; five different officers were handling one communication and all discussing it. That, in his opinion, was vital time wasted.

(m) *Rapid Changes of Officers Undesirable*.—Another factor making for delay was deposed to by the Naval representative at A.C.H. He said :

I have been in the A.C.H. practically for five months and during that period there have been seventeen changes of officers in the Royal Australian Air Force within the first three months, and I would estimate D. 535. to the time of the attack that there were 30 changes of officers.

(n) *Fitness of Officer for Job Assigned*.—Another witness addressing himself to the same question expressed the opinion that head-quarters in Melbourne regarded a man as a number. He said "If they want a man to send to Darwin they will send him to Darwin, and he may have been in the Antarctic", and generally he expressed D. 545. the view that there was little attempt to select a suitable man for the particular job in hand.

(o) *A.R.P. Work Performed*.—In spite of the differences which had occurred between the A.R.P. and the Administrator, a number of A.R.P. workers, on the occurrence of the raid, immediately went to the positions originally planned for them D. 359. to act, and these members of the A.R.P. did excellent service both in attending to wounded, extricating the bodies of those who were killed and aiding the police and military authorities. The Chief Warden thought these men had performed a magnificent job and he requested that their efforts might, if possible, be rewarded by a little home leave. D. 427.

(p) *Difficulty in Obtaining Medical Men for First-aid Training*.—It is probably D. 378. now of little importance in relation to Darwin to draw attention to a complaint that, owing to absence of medical men, it was not possible to get proper training in first-aid for the personnel of the A.R.P. The point is only mentioned here because the same difficulty may arise elsewhere in Australia, and knowledge of the difficulty in Darwin may direct attention to the necessity of trying to avoid the same difficulty elsewhere.

(q) *Slit Trenches*.—Much evidence was given before me of the effectiveness of slit trenches to protect those who took shelter in them. The only instances in which they did not prevent injury to those sheltering were the cases of the Post Office and of one trench on the Royal Australian Air Force Station. At the Post Office there was a direct hit upon the trench and the occupants were killed. At the Royal Australian Air Force Station one officer was shot through the throat and killed.

(r) *Commendation*.—I should like to draw attention to the work done by Constable McNabb. All those who spoke of his conduct agreed in the view that his D. 399. actions on the day of the raid were worthy of the highest praise.

## ADDITIONAL MATTERS REPORTED ON.

### (aa) *Improving Communications*.

Air Commodore Wilson gave the following evidence :—

One of the main troubles in this northern area is the long time it takes to get supplies here. The aerodrome equipment, which is heavy stuff, takes a very long time to reach the forward areas near Darwin, D. 113. and the necessary work of maintaining aerodromes is entirely dependent on machinery. Road-making D. 114. machinery is essential. Taking that a step further, this is all allied with the provision of bomber aircraft. I think it is very essential that some complete works organization be raised in the Darwin area and to the south, say, to Alice Springs, with complete powers to direct and advise on all works matters outside. . . . If we had that, most of our difficulties would be overcome and most of our defence in regard to aerodromes would go ahead. I cannot stress the matter too strongly because one of the main considerations here for some considerable time has been the development of bases in the carrying out of works required for the Air Force, and I do not know where I stand in the matter because there are so many people to whom I have to refer. This would be merely a Service organization to make the people do what they are told in accordance with the requirements here.

### (bb) *Sealing Military Road*.

He added a specific recommendation that the north-south military road should be sealed. Elaborating his view he said that such a step would enable a much greater volume of traffic to be handled, that under present conditions the dust nuisance on the road prevented vehicles from being routed nearer than half a mile apart and that obviously if that distance could be reduced a greater volume of traffic could be carried. Finally he expressed the opinion that anything that could be done to speed up the work would be helpful and would make the north more independent.

D. 420.

His view was concurred in by a surveyor on the Administrator's staff.

I realize, of course, that the carrying into effect of such a policy is dependent upon the availability of the necessary road-making machinery and of the necessary sealing material, and no doubt the suggestion will have to be considered in the light of such matters.

(cc) *Natives of Melville Island.*

M. 154A.

M. 232.

D. 548.

Evidence was given before me that the natives of Melville Island were in all probability more favourably disposed towards the Japanese than towards ourselves. The matter was not fully investigated by me, and a contrary opinion in relation to the majority of natives was expressed by Brother McCarthy, of the Catholic Mission on Bathurst Island.

I draw the Government's attention to these opinions in order that the matter may be more fully investigated if it is thought necessary.

(dd) *The Berrima Hospital.*

M. 228.

Colonel Culpin of the A.A.M.C., who was in charge of the Berrima Military Hospital, complained of the lack of co-operation which existed between the Military Head-quarters and his hospital, and of the dispersion of sections of the hospital in widely separated localities which prevented it functioning as a general hospital. He also complained that the hospital had been built on a site which was too exposed and too near military objectives.

M. 220 et seq.

I do not further develop this question because this was the only evidence given on the matter, but Colonel Culpin desired that his evidence should be brought before the responsible authorities for further consideration. I merely draw attention to his request.

This Report completes my survey of the evidence and of the matters upon which I have been asked to report, and I return herewith my commission.

(Sgd.) CHARLES J. LOWE,  
Commissioner.

9th April, 1942.

## COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Navy Office,  
Department of the Navy,  
Melbourne, S.C.I.,  
21st April, 1942.

Memorandum for :

The Secretary,  
Department of Defence.

AIR RAIDS ON DARWIN—REPORT OF Mr. JUSTICE LOWE.

With reference to your memoranda of 4th and 16th April, the Naval Board desire to reply as follows :—

2. The matter of berthing ships in shallow waters to facilitate salvage in the event of sinking is in mind for both Darwin and other ports where enemy attack may be anticipated. Factors such as unloading facilities, reasonable proximity of shallow water to wharves, the necessity for the acceptance of risks to ensure a quick "turn-round" of shipping, &c., must, however, be taken into consideration.

3. Naval Officers-in-Charge of the various ports concerned have been reminded of the necessity for berthing ships in shallow waters unless other considerations make this impracticable or undesirable.

4. In regard to the A/A armament of H.M.A.S. *Platypus*, this is known to be less satisfactory than is desirable and this is also the case with many other H.M.A. Ships as well as Merchant Ships. Steps are being taken to improve this state of affairs as guns become available.

5. In regard to the civil jetty at Darwin, the Naval Board have for years past stressed the necessity to improve unloading facilities at that place. Approximately eighteen months ago a contract was let for the extension of this jetty and preliminary measures on the extension had been put in hand by the contractor. The plant had been erected for the fabrication of piles as necessary for the extension, but no works, however, had actually started on the extension itself.

6. After the entry of Japan into the war unloading facilities at Darwin became a matter of graver urgency and the Naval Board obtained approval for the construction of a temporary timber jetty which was to be built adjacent to the Boom area.

7. Arrangements had been made for this work to be put in hand and men and material were made available. The material was actually on board a vessel and on its way to Darwin, but after the first bombing attack when the wharf was partly destroyed, this material was unloaded at Melbourne and is now at that place awaiting shipment to Darwin and the completion of this temporary wharf as occasion presents itself.

8. In regard to oiling facilities at the wharf, these of course have now been destroyed. A pipe line has been run to a small adjacent wharf used for Boom Defence purposes and at this wharf oil and water can be discharged into vessels.

9. In regard to the proposal to run a pipe line out to a fuelling position from a buoy in the harbour, this matter was investigated some time ago, but, due to the great technical difficulties associated with the very large rise and fall of tide at Darwin, it was considered impracticable to proceed with the project.

(Sgd.) GEO. L. MACANDIE,  
for Secretary.



## COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Department of the Army,  
Melbourne, S.C.1,  
22nd April, 1942.

Memorandum for :  
The Secretary,  
Department of Defence.

## AIR 'RAIDS ON DARWIN—REPORT BY MR. JUSTICE LOWE.

With reference to your letters of 4th, 13th and 16th April, forwarding reports furnished to the Prime Minister by Mr. Justice Lowe on air raids on Darwin, I append hereunder comments which the Chief of the General Staff, pursuant to the Minister's direction, has made on the main report—

With reference to the report on air raids at Darwin, Mr. Justice Lowe's main comment in respect of the Army related to A.A. defences and suggests that the gun density at Darwin was not as high as it should have been.

Darwin is an important operational area, but is not a vital area in the same sense as Sydney, Newcastle and Port Kembla. The reference to a 36-gun density in A.A. manuals is intended to apply to such vital areas as dock and industrial areas in the United Kingdom liable to concentrated attacks by land-based aircraft. At no place in Australia can such density be attained for some considerable time.

At the time of the raid on 19th February, Darwin had 16—3.7-in. and 2—3-in. anti-aircraft guns in operation. This was the maximum available, having regard to other urgent operational requirements and the need for providing for anti-aircraft defence of vital areas in the rest of Australia. Since the first raid anti-aircraft defences of Darwin have been increased by an additional 4—3.7-in. anti-aircraft guns, 24 Bofors (Australian Imperial Force), and 28 United States .5 anti-aircraft machine guns. These will be further increased as more guns are available from production for allotment to Darwin.

Control of civil administration was assumed by Military Commandant on 21st February and confirmed by National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations on 26th March.

Control of operations and administrations in the Darwin—Alice Springs areas is effected as follows :—

- (a) Major-General Herring, Commanding 6th Division, is responsible for the co-ordination of all service plans for the defence of the Darwin area. He has absolute operational control of Navy, Army and Air Forces when a land attack is clearly imminent or started.
- (b) Major-General Blake commands the Line of Communication Area extending from Darwin to Alice Springs and is responsible for the administration in that area under the general direction of Major-General Herring.

2. After considering the final report, the C.G.S. did not find it necessary to add anything further to the above comments.

(Sgd.) F. R. SINCLAIR,  
Secretary.

## AIR RAIDS ON DARWIN—COMMENTS BY DEPARTMENT OF AIR ON REPORT BY MR. JUSTICE LOWE.

### GENERAL.

1. The report by Mr. Justice Lowe on the air raid on Darwin on the 19th February, 1942, has been noted and, where necessary, corrective action has been taken.
2. Prior to the attack, it should be borne in mind that the Darwin area had been handed over to ABDACOM who were responsible for the operations in that area, and the defence of Darwin; in fact, just prior to the attack, Timor-Koepang was in process of being reinforced from Darwin. These reinforcements had practically arrived at Koepang when orders were received for their return to Darwin. It was apparent that the Japanese command had organized the attack at Darwin to neutralize, if possible, any attempt to interfere with their main attack on Timor. Darwin area did not revert to the Australian Command until 7th March.
3. Previously to the attack, a good deal of difficulty had been encountered with signals from ABDACOM Head-quarters relating to the allocation of responsibility with regard to reconnaissance, and it was mainly for this reason that the A.O.C., Air Commodore Wilson, had proceeded to ABDACOM to endeavour to clear these matters up and he did not return to Darwin until after the raid had taken place.
4. The above gives some outline of the difficulties involved in that area at the time, and the partial breakdown of intelligence which should have given warning of the likelihood of attack, but in no way mitigates the two main failures which took place at Darwin.

### FAILURE OF ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE OPERATIONS TO GIVE WARNING OF THE RAID AND FAILURE TO MAINTAIN LOG BOOK.

5. The first main failure was the delay in transmitting from the Area Combined Head-quarters the identity of aircraft approaching from Bathurst Island, reported through Amalgamated Wireless Postal Radio Station at Darwin at 9.37 a.m. to the Army, Navy and Area Combined Head-quarters, Darwin. The report states that the Army received at Military Head-quarters a separate warning from an observation post at 9.50 a.m.—ten minutes before the attack, but does not state from what observation post or where. The Naval Head-quarters were notified at 9.45 a.m.—the report states possibly from Area Combined Head-quarters. It is understood from the Senior Naval Commander that he received a report from the Bathurst Island observer (who was under his supervision) direct, but this apparently could not have been the case, or the ships in the harbour would have been warned beforehand.
6. The delay in identification at Area Combined Head-quarters was explained to some extent by the fact that it was known that a number of American P.40s. had set out for Koepang and were returning on account of bad weather, and also the fact that some were on patrol in the neighbourhood, and these factors suggested in the mind of the Operations Room Controller that these aircraft could only be the American P.40s. This was a mistake which cannot entirely be excused, especially in view of the report that a large number of aircraft had been observed at a great height, and the knowledge that bombing aircraft could be utilized by the enemy from Ambon, which they already held.
7. It is recognized that continued false warnings will occur, especially in the initial stages of war, and although nothing is worse than continual false alarms given to the civilian and military population, it is almost impossible to prevent them until adequate and essential services are installed, and the personnel trained in their working and maintenance.
8. The responsibility for the delay in giving warning was shared by the Area Combined Head-quarters, as the Darwin Defence Committee (Combined Planning Committee, Darwin Area) had previously decided that responsibility for air raid warnings was a function of Area Combined Head-quarters.

### *Corrective Action.*

9. The system for giving warning of raids was already established and organized on 19th February, 1942, and the failure that occurred is not to be attributed to the system itself but rather to the inexperience of those who were operating it at that time.
10. The experience gained by personnel in the first and subsequent raids, coupled with the installation of a radio location system, should prevent a recurrence of the conditions which prevailed on 19th February, 1942.
11. The failure to maintain a complete log of events at Royal Australian Air Force Operations is a matter of internal administration which the officer commanding has been instructed to pursue and correct.
12. The delay in giving warning must be attributed largely to inexperience and to the fact that this was the first enemy action against the Australian mainland. The facts are such as to warrant the withdrawal and replacement of certain officers and other ranks. This has already been done.

### PROVISION FOR DISPERSAL, PROTECTION AND CAMOUFLAGE OF AIRCRAFT.

13. The second main failure in which the Air Force was gravely at fault was the lack of effective aerodrome defence measures, i.e., training relating to action in the case of a bombing attack, the definition of duties for each individual in charge; lectures to officers and men on their duties—especially in regard to panic.
14. There is no doubt that a good deal of difficulty resulted from the impossibility of providing adequate equipment and labour. In an attempt to meet these difficulties in providing dispersal areas and camouflage close to the aerodrome, over-dispersal had taken place, combined with want of organization beforehand. Aircraft and personnel had been dispersed to aerodromes as far distant as Daly Waters and Batchelor, without adequate arrangements and communications. Officers commanding squadrons had been forced not only to be responsible for the operations of their squadrons, but for the administrative work connected with the transfer of parties to isolated aerodromes in country where facilities are entirely absent. Given a little more time, there is no doubt that communications, training and aerodrome defence would have been strengthened, and it is considered that with officers who had had war experience, improvisation would have been adopted to a much greater extent.

15. Dispersal can be carried to a dangerous degree unless it is realized that aircraft must be available at short notice. Improvisation must take the place of equipment to a very great extent. This severe lesson has had the effect of making responsible officers realize what is required with regard to the better training of officers and men in leadership, better training in aerodrome defence, and that the improvisation of effective communications is an absolute necessity of highest priority.

16. Notwithstanding the lack of adequate equipment and labour, steps had already been taken at the time of the raid to place the Darwin defences on a more satisfactory basis. Provision had been made for camouflage of the Royal Australian Air Force Station itself, decoy aircraft had already been supplied and arrangements made for further supplies of such aircraft; all operational aircraft had been camouflaged on the outbreak of the war in Europe. Dispersal loops with aircraft camouflaged inserts were already authorized and these, which it has now been possible to provide with the additional labour now available, should greatly reduce the possibility of damage to and destruction of grounded aircraft. In addition, ground defences have been improved by the establishment of American aerodrome defence sections at aerodromes within the Darwin area.

#### OMISSION TO PROFIT BY LESSONS IN CRETE, MALTA AND MALAYA.

17. Information concerning the lessons to be gained from reports on attacks on Crete, Malta and Malaya had already been forwarded to all Royal Australian Air Force Commands, and it is the duty of responsible commanding officers to incorporate such lessons in their plans within the limitation of their local resources. As pointed out in Mr. Justice Lowe's report, these lessons were known to many officers of the Royal Australian Air Force and failure to apply these can only be attributed to commanding officers on the spot. It must be reiterated, however, that the extent to which new plans and ideas could be implemented was hampered by a general lack of equipment and shortage of labour which existed, although a high degree of priority had been allotted to provision of equipment and labour to the Darwin area at the time of the raid.

18. It is admitted also that the layout of the station, which was similar to that of the aerodromes in Malaya, was little suited to meet such an attack as that of the 19th February. The station was planned and construction commenced prior to the outbreak of war in accordance with the then existing policy and practice in the British Air Forces.

#### *Corrective Action.*

19. As already stated, information bulletins incorporating lessons to be learnt from experience in aerodrome defence, dispersal, protection and camouflage of aircraft, were and are in the possession of all Area Commanders. In addition, Air Staff Directives have been issued as to how and by what means these lessons are to be applied; these directives include detailed instructions. Some of the necessary equipment has already been provided and this, together with measures which must and can be improvised by commanders on the spot within the limit of their local resources will undoubtedly improve the standard in ground defence of aerodromes.

20. Additional dispersal strips and landing grounds have already been and are still being constructed in increasing numbers.

21. The comprehensive nature of the instructions which have been issued may be judged from a perusal of a revised edition of Air Board Memorandum No. 5—attached as Appendix "A".

#### CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ABSENCE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL FROM THE STATION FOR A PERIOD OF DAYS FOLLOWING THE RAID.

22. The facts disclosed by the report suggest that the events which occurred were largely due to lack of preparation and organization beforehand. It is agreed that with competent leadership, personnel would rapidly have resumed their duties. The lack of training must, to some extent, be attributed to lack of equipment to provide the necessary training but, in spite of this and the fact that the majority of personnel were experiencing enemy air attack on a heavy scale for the first time, there is little excuse for the administrative chaos which ensued.

#### LACK OF TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP OF MEN.

23. It is well known that the Royal Australian Air Force has carried out a rapid expansion, possibly unprecedented in the history of a highly technical service; an expansion from approximately 3,000 men to some 67,000 in two and a half years of war conditions. To obtain men in large numbers with the desired quality of leadership and the requisite technical qualifications is difficult. This factor has always been appreciated and training instructions have been framed to overcome this disability as far as possible by providing for initial courses in administration and discipline. These courses are now supplemented by training in military tactics in units themselves. With great increases in the number of officers, a falling off in quality is to be expected; due regard has been paid to this possibility. It will be understood too that to obtain a very necessary leavening of experienced personnel in all units of a rapidly expanding service, changes in personnel must be frequent; these changes have been co-ordinated within the limitations imposed by the requirements of the Service as a whole. These difficulties have been assessed and watched with a view to taking active steps to overcome them.

#### *Corrective Action.*

24. Lectures on morale and leadership comprise an important section of all training syllabuses and instructions have been issued from time to time emphasizing the necessity for commanders to stress this all important aspect of the duties of officers.

#### LACK OF TRAINING IN AERODROME DEFENCE.

25. Mention has already been made in paragraphs 19–21 of the action taken with regard to aerodrome defence. It is clear that at Darwin adequate steps had not been taken to train personnel fully in their defence duties. This was partly due to lack of equipment and partly due to a lack of realization of their duty on the part of responsible officers.

#### *Corrective Action.*

26. Every effort is being made to obtain and issue sufficient equipment, i.e., rifles, bayonets, &c., to enable ground personnel to be trained adequately, and to ensure that personnel are fully trained and equipped before being posted to forward areas.



27. Training in defence, both armed and unarmed, is included in training syllabuses and all officers are instructed and warned of the importance of having men adequately trained in the first instance, and of maintaining a strict standard of discipline.

28. North-western Area has issued instructions covering the training of all ranks in elementary field tactics and the use of small arms.

#### LACK OF RADIO LOCATION, WIRELESS INTELLIGENCE AND AIR OBSERVER ORGANIZATION.

29. Technical and other difficulties in connexion with the original installation of a radio location system led to considerable delays.

30. It was decided to send a locally constructed radio location set to Darwin as this set was much lighter and easier to transport by air than either of the two sets which had been available in Sydney for some time. This locally built set had, in fact, been installed before the raid but was not ready for operation. This system is now functioning with considerable success. A second radio location system is now in the course of installation and will considerably enhance the value of the whole warning system of the area. Consideration is now being given to the installation of a third unit at Darwin. It will be appreciated that the provision of a third radio location unit at Darwin is dependent upon availability of equipment and priority in relation to the needs of other areas.

31. The suggestion to erect a single factory for the provision of radio location equipment is considered to be unsound for the following reasons:—

- (a) The time taken to erect such a factory, together with the difficulty in amalgamating trained personnel into one unit.
- (b) Such a factory would entail the concentration of valuable equipment and personnel in one unit.
- (c) There would be a grave risk of compromising the secrecy of the equipment.

Under the present system of production, many firms make different parts of the equipment and no one firm is familiar with the details of the complete set. Munitions Department assemble the various components.

32. The wireless station at Darwin embraces a system of wireless intelligence and operators skilled in Japanese morse are constantly on watch. In this way, a close watch is kept on enemy W/T traffic and much valuable information is obtained.

33. Owing to the sparse population, there are serious difficulties in the way of implementing the Observer Organization at Darwin on the same basis as in other parts of Australia. Use is, however, made of the Navy coast watching service and every effort is being made to make the observer system in the area as comprehensive as possible. It is probable, however, that arrangements will have to be made to use Service personnel to a greater degree to man observer posts.

34. The increase in the radio location services and the addition, where possible, of observation posts will improve the probability of warning of approach of enemy aircraft in sufficient time for our fighter aircraft, which are now stationed there, to obtain tactical position before the enemy reach the target area. The improvement in both radio and ground communications and the arrival—it is hoped before long—of an aircraft with a greater radius of action, will allow of more distant reconnaissance, and enable the Air Force to strike at the enemy and not wait on the defensive.

#### *Corrective Action.*

35. A Fighter Sector Head-quarters has been established in Darwin. This head-quarters receives information of the approach of enemy aircraft from all available sources by the quickest means possible, i.e., by telephone and radio from the Radio Location units, coast watchers, air observers, W/T intelligence and reports from reconnaissance aircraft and ships at sea. The Controller in this head-quarters uses this information in directing the fighter squadrons by telephone or R/T communication to intercept enemy aircraft. This system is based on that used in the United Kingdom.

#### INABILITY TO USE AIRCRAFT AFTER THE RAID.

36. It is agreed that the inability to use aircraft after the raid was due to the complete lack of personnel to handle such administration facilities as were available or could have been improvised after the raid. This failure is the responsibility of the then Station Commander.

#### *Corrective Action.*

37. Instructions have been issued to all commanders to ensure that personnel under their command know in detail the action to be taken by them in the event of an air raid "warning", "attack" and the "all-clear" signals. These instructions include arrangements for reconstruction and salvage after raids.

#### EMERGENCY WATER SUPPLY NOT USED.

38. This is a matter of internal administration. In the circumstances, it is almost inconceivable that the Yale lock or even the chain on the emergency water system could not have been broken.

#### NECESSITY FOR MECHANICAL AID TO REPAIR AERODROME DAMAGE.

39. The need for the rapid repair of runways and filling of craters is fully appreciated, and instructions had already been issued as to how this work was to be done. Every use must be made of mechanical aids but the availability of this equipment is limited by other works of very high priority on landing grounds and roads. Where practicable, however, they are made available by local arrangement to meet an emergency. This can be arranged most readily in the Darwin area where the military authorities are carrying out works, but at time the mechanical equipment may be in use at some distant place.

#### *Corrective Action.*

40. Aerodrome maintenance units are being formed to undertake this work.

#### NECESSITY FOR AIRCRAFT SPARES.

41. Every effort has been and is being made to obtain spares from local manufacturing resources and from overseas. Transport aircraft are few at present but are being used to full capacity to ferry urgent spares to Darwin. In addition, the overland route, which is slow, is being used to full capacity.

## COMMON TELEPHONE CIRCUIT RECOMMENDED.

42. The idea of a common telephone circuit is basically sound and where possible it has been introduced ; it is already in use at some Combined Defence Head-quarters. One of the difficulties in setting up such a network is the necessity for alternative routes so that line failure through bombing will not completely disrupt communication by telephone.

## RAPID CHANGES OF OFFICERS UNDESIRABLE.

43. Mention has already been made of the changes in personnel which are unavoidable in a rapidly expending Service to obtain a leavening of experienced personnel in units. The number of changes mentioned in Mr. Justice Lowe's report is excessive but were incidental to the formation of north-western area. Changes are kept to a minimum compatible with efficiency and, where practicable, they are spread out over long periods ; it might be added that climatic conditions at Darwin render it desirable to make more frequent changes in that area than at units located in more temperate climates.

## FITNESS OF OFFICER FOR JOB ASSIGNED.

44. The opinion that Head-quarters in Melbourne regarded a man as a number is not in accordance with fact. The whole principle of training is to train officers and men for the work required of them. To this end, special courses of instruction, in the case of the Air Force, cover a very wide range of duties. Selection for posts are made on the basis of results of examinations and general suitability of the individual. In some instances, however, individuals prove unsuitable for the duties to which they are assigned ; sometimes the reason is inability to adapt themselves to climatic conditions, clash of temperaments or domestic worries. All these factors receive consideration but must, of course, be treated in relation to the requirements of the Service as a whole.

## IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS.

45. The difficulties of getting supplies to Darwin are well known. The arrangement now operating whereby the General Officer Commanding in the Darwin area is the authority and controller of works on roads and landing grounds should overcome many of our difficulties.

## CONCLUSION.

46. The above comments cover the points brought out in Mr. Justice Lowe's report insofar as they affect the Air Force. The urgent need to apply the lessons learnt is fully appreciated and the importance of these has been impressed upon all concerned.

47. Both the Air Officer Commanding and his Chief Staff Officer have been replaced, as they have to bear the main responsibility. Others will be withdrawn and replaced where found necessary and now that equipment is coming forward, the increasing strength of the Air Force at Darwin will improve the morale of the three Services.

(Sgd.) W. BOSTOCK, A.V.M.  
for Air Chief Marshal,  
Chief of the Air Staff.

24th April, 1942.

## APPENDIX "A"

## AIR BOARD MEMORANDUM No. 5.

*Issue No. 2.*

Air Force Head-quarters,  
Melbourne, S.C.1,  
19th April, 1942.

The following Memorandum is hereby promulgated for information and guidance. This Issue cancels Air Board Memorandum No. 5, dated 21st July, 1941, as amended by Amendment Lists Nos. 7 and 11.

By Command of the Air Board,

F. J. MULROONEY,  
Secretary.

## GROUND DEFENCE.

*Aim.*

1. The aim of defence schemes is to—
  - (a) maintain operational efficiency at the highest level,
  - (b) inflict as much damage as possible on enemy attacking forces,
  - (c) provide the maximum protection to aircraft on the ground, installations and personnel.

## RESPONSIBILITY.

2. Air and other officers commanding are responsible that defence schemes cover all contingencies and that personnel under their command are trained to be fully competent to perform the duties allotted to them.

3. Defence of the areas contiguous to air force establishments is a responsibility of the Army. This does not relieve the Royal Australian Air Force commander of responsibility for the ultimate safety of his command. Royal Australian Air Force commanding officers must therefore improvise from local resources defences against ground and air-borne troop attacks. Their defence plans must conform to those of the local Army commanders in respect of area defence.

4. The Army will appoint officers for the specific duty of co-operating with Royal Australian Air Force commanders in all aspects of defence schemes for Air Force establishments.

## FORMS OF ATTACK.

5. (i) Bombing attack.  
 (ii) Cannon or machine-gun attack.  
 (iii) Attack by both bombers and fighters acting in co-operation.  
 (iv) Attack by parachutists.  
 (v) Attack by land forces including light armoured forces.  
 (vi) Sabotage.
6. Full preparations must be made to combat an attack employing any of the methods outlined above, or a number of methods delivered in conjunction with each other up to full invasion scale of attack.
7. The type and weight of attack to which any unit or establishment is likely to be subjected will be governed to a certain extent by the distance from the ocean coast-line and by the location of heavy industries and other military objectives. On all unit establishment tables provision is made for defence personnel and allocation of weapons.

## FORMS OF DEFENCE.

8. The following are the main forms of aerodrome defence :—
  - (i) Dispersion and protection.
  - (ii) Camouflage and subterfuge.
  - (iii) Control of lighting.
  - (iv) Warning system.
  - (v) Defence by aircraft.
  - (vi) Ground defence.
  - (vii) Defence against ground attack.
  - (viii) Security against sabotage.

## DISPERSION AND PROTECTION.

9. Aircraft, stores, fuel, bombs and personnel must be dispersed over as wide an area and in as irregular a manner as possible, having regard to local topography, availability of transport, alternative landing strips or areas, and the necessity for maintaining full operational efficiency.

10. The ideal arrangement consists of scattered groups of landing strips or areas each having its own stores, fuel, &c., dispersed in its particular locality and connected by telephone and R/T to the unit head-quarters.

11. Every aerodrome must be regarded as a number of landing areas or strips each having its own dispersal areas.

12. Where the construction of aircraft protective pens destroys concealment, then the requirements for concealment will override requirements for protection. Concealed positions should be dispersed and should be some distance from obvious targets.



13. Slit trenches afford adequate protection for petrol drums and other stores against any form of air attack. If the topography allows, aircraft may be located in pits dug into the sides of hills subject to the provision that concealment must be the first consideration.

*Buildings and Installations—Squadron Aerodromes.*

14. The present policy is to plan new stations so that buildings and installations are dispersed as widely as possible, compatible with efficiency.

15. Major works in connexion with the protection of buildings and installations will normally be arranged by Air Force Head-quarters. This does not relieve unit commanders of their responsibilities for making the best local arrangements possible.

*Fire Fighting.*

16. In addition to the normal fire fighting appliances, all buildings and dispersal areas will be supplied with sand boxes, long handled shovels, stirrup pumps and water buckets to deal with fires resulting from incendiary bombs or from other causes. In addition, a reserve of water should be stored which will suffice to keep two hoses in continuous action for twenty minutes.

*Barracks Area.*

17. The barracks area must be sited away from the aerodrome and so planned as to deceive air reconnaissance. Hutments may be associated with an existing civilian settlement. Where this is not possible, concealment and camouflage must be relied upon and may include provision of overhead netting to cover roads and paths.

18. Each station will be so designed that the engineering, sanitation, &c., services can accommodate one reinforcing squadron.

*Operational Aerodromes.*

19. Buildings in operational landing areas will be kept to a minimum. Deception will be obtained as far as possible by converting or developing existing civilian homes, farms, &c. Buildings which must be specially constructed for Royal Australian Air Force use, and obvious as such, will be camouflaged and concealed.

20. Roads should not lead to buildings unless the building is one, such as a farmhouse, which could be expected to be provided with an access road. When special road construction is necessary, roads should pass the building to which access is desired. The short access road or path from the main road should be provided with overhead camouflage.

21. Key points, which are located near landing areas, and essential for the maintenance of operations, should be concealed as far as possible and, in addition, splinter proofed and provided with overhead cover against low flying front gun attack. Such key points are—

- Operations Rooms.
- W/T Buildings and Signals Sections.
- R.D.F. Buildings.
- Power Plants.
- Telephone Exchanges.
- Bomb and Ammunition Stores.
- Petrol Installations.

22. It may, however, be possible to rely upon deception for protection by adopting to Royal Australian Air Force requirements existing buildings on the outskirts of a town.

*Maintenance Echelon.*

23. The servicing and immediate repairs of aircraft are normally done at a site situated up to 30 miles from operational landing grounds.

These sites must be connected by road with operational landing grounds and communication by telephone duplicated by W/T provided.

24. These sites will be provided with one or more landing strips.

25. The same policy as in paragraphs 19 and 20 is to be applied to buildings and roads.

*Protection of Personnel.*

26. Slit trenches with overhead camouflage cover and in the form of a Vee should be constructed to provide accommodation for not less than 125 per cent. of personnel normally located in any given area. Trenches should be sited as close as possible to the areas in which men are normally employed, but clear of obstacles such as buildings or trees liable to detonate a fragmentation bomb above ground level; this distance should not be less than the height of the obstacle. During an air attack, personnel who are not required to man key posts are to be dispersed to slit trenches.

27. Slit trenches must be regarded as points of assembly for action, in addition to providing protection for personnel against forms of attacks to which they cannot retaliate.

28. *Anti-gas Protection.*—Present policy does not provide for decontamination buildings or equipment.

29. Respirators will be held by each member as a personal issue. Respirators held either on issue or in a store are to be kept in a serviceable condition at all times. Mark V respirators will be issued to key personnel manning telephones.

*CAMOUFLAGE AND SUBTERFUGE.*

30. Camouflage is directed through the Department of Defence. Committees are organized in each State to experiment and advise Royal Australian Air Force commanders upon this work. Royal Australian Air Force local commanders will appoint Service representatives to these Committees.

31. To be effective, camouflage, together with subterfuge, must be employed on a wide scale.

32. Camouflage cover, hide-outs, &c., whether natural or artificial, should be provided for all aircraft, stores, vehicles, whether serviceable, unserviceable or dummy. Artificial fires or explosions, smoke, dummy personnel, activity near hide-outs for dummy aircraft (when enemy reconnaissance aircraft are overhead), changes in position of dummy aircraft and R/T signals giving false information are some of the ways whereby the enemy may be misled.

33. To give a false idea of our own strength and encourage the enemy to attack dummy positions, portions of dummy aircraft or portions of aircraft awaiting write-off, which can be made to appear serviceable, should be allowed occasionally to protrude from beneath overhead camouflage cover and so be visible to enemy reconnaissance aircraft. The position of such parts should be altered from time to time, particularly after enemy reconnaissances and raids.

34. Rapid repair or replacement of dummy aircraft or hide-outs for dummy aircraft parts after a raid may also confuse the enemy.

35. Complete dummy aircraft may be used to good advantage at the time of arrival or departure of our own aircraft on active operations. They must be movable and their positions changed frequently.

36. Air Force Head-quarters will issue drawings of dummy aircraft and arrange for their manufacture. Air and other officers commanding are, however, responsible for taking all possible measures to provide dummy aircraft and dummy aircraft parts from local resources.

37. All personnel must be trained in the use of camouflage. Where practicable, camouflage squads should be formed to work under the direction of the Unit Camouflage Officer.

#### CONTROL OF LIGHTING.

38. Lighting restrictions at Royal Australian Air Force units must conform to State or Municipal regulations which are in force in the locality of the units concerned. As, however, Royal Australian Air Force units must be regarded as being enemy targets, strict measures must be taken to ensure that, when necessary, complete and effective blackout conditions can be imposed. Normally this will be done by control from master switches in Operations Buildings.

39. As lighting facilities must be available in such places as operations rooms, telephone exchanges and hospitals, arrangements must be made to prevent the emission of light from these places.

40. Air and other officers commanding must exercise their own discretion in determining the form of lighting best suited to the different units under their command, the degree of restriction being governed by the design and layout of buildings, their distance from the coastline and the necessity to prevent units being readily recognized as military establishments.

41. Under conditions which necessitate more or less continued "brown" or "blackout" conditions, it is desirable to guard against a depressing effect upon aircraft crews and other personnel. If possible, therefore, arrangements should be made to provide buildings which will permit of full interior lighting, but which will not infringe the "brown" or "blackout" restrictions.

#### WARNING SYSTEM.

42. A warning system must be established and warnings conveyed to all areas occupied by Royal Australian Air Force personnel in accordance with the standard signals given in Appendix "A". Copies of these signals are to be placed on all unit notice-boards.

#### DEFENCE BY AIRCRAFT.

43. On receipt of a warning, fighter aircraft may be ordered into the air under instructions from Fighter Sector Head-quarters.

44. Dependent upon local conditions at the time of attack and the degree of warning received, aircraft about to take off or land, or exposed on the landing area for some other reason, should be ordered to—

- (i) take off on their mission; or
- (ii) proceed to another landing area; or
- (iii) move, as far as practicable, to such a position as to gain maximum protection from ground defences.

45. All other aircraft must remain in camouflaged dispersal positions. Guns fitted to aircraft in dispersed positions should not be used to counter an attack unless the dispersed position itself is directly attacked. The indiscriminate use of aircraft guns from dispersal positions is liable to disclose the whereabouts of aircraft which may otherwise have escaped detection by the enemy.

#### GROUND DEFENCE.

46. Sufficient transport should be allocated to enable personnel employed in active defence to move quickly to any part of the landing area, or to another area.

##### *Ground Defence Against Air Attack.*

47. An air attack may be countered from the ground by fire from anti aircraft guns and rifles.

- (i) Lewis and/or Vickers guns, in accordance with establishment tables; will be held by all units occupying aerodromes and landing grounds.
- (ii) Light anti-aircraft machine-guns must be sited in relation to the dispersal scheme and should, as far as possible, be so distributed as to ensure mutual support and effective concentration of fire over the whole area in which aircraft and stores are dispersed.
- (iii) Rifle fire must be used to support anti-aircraft machine-gun fire and to cover the positions of these guns.
- (iv) Machine-gun and rifle pits should be sited below ground level, designed in an irregular pattern and provided with overhead camouflage cover at ground level where possible.
- (v) The use of tracer ammunition should be avoided with isolated light anti aircraft guns or rifles as the tracer reveals the gun position and enables the enemy to attack the position with a greater concentration of fire. Tracer, however, should be used when guns are so sited that all positions afford mutual protection.

##### *Ground Attack—External.*

48. All air-force ranks will be supplied with appropriate weapons which will include tommy guns and hand grenades.



49. Although defence against external ground attack is a responsibility of the Army, the Royal Australian Air Force commander must provide defence against ground and airborne troop attacks in co-operation with the local Army commander. Arrangements must be made to—

- (i) Site ground machine-gun posts with effective external fields of fire both for direct and cross fire.
- (ii) Prepare obstructions for approach roads and gateways; obstructions must be covered by machine-gun, rifle fire, tommy guns or grenades.
- (iii) Maintain armed guards at entrance points and armed mobile patrols in the area embraced by the defence scheme.
- (iv) Maintain communication with the local Army commander with a view to obtaining as much Military assistance and operational intelligence as can be afforded.

#### *Ground Attack—Internal.*

50. Internal attack may be by parachutists and troops from troop carrying aircraft. To counter such attacks, Royal Australian Air Force personnel must be prepared and trained to resist with all available resources, inflicting as much damage as is possible on the enemy whilst keeping the local Army commander informed of the situation. It must be borne in mind that assistance from military forces cannot be relied upon as such forces may be fully engaged in adjacent or other localities.

51. Measures adopted for ground defence against air attack are also appropriate for defence against internal attack by enemy paratroops. These measures may be supplemented by placing obstructions in such a manner that the available landing area is that which is most effectively covered by the siting of our own weapons. Hand grenades may also be used effectively against troops deplaning from aircraft.

52. The first objective of paratroops is to cut communications. It is therefore vital to maintain W/T communications, particularly when land lines are not buried and can be cut easily.

53. Paratroops are most vulnerable immediately after landing. Armed personnel should be as mobile as possible in order to attack the enemy before he can consolidate.

54. Adequate ground defence must be provided for anti-aircraft positions as they are particularly vulnerable and among the first objectives of paratroops.

55. When the aerodrome is located in jungle or heavily wooded country, it is extremely difficult to locate the points where paratroops land and to follow enemy movements thereafter. Lookout positions in tree tops should be arranged, and communications established with unit head-quarters. The most effective method of ascertaining the whereabouts and movements of paratroops in thickly wooded country is by low air reconnaissance, as the parachutes are often visible from the air.

56. Reserve supplies of food, water and ammunition (quantities dependent upon location) should be available within the landing ground area in case the area is cut off.

#### SABOTAGE.

57. Guards and patrols are to be provided at all points necessary to counter sabotage.

58. A strict system of admission pass should be used to control entrance to stations and establishments and to operations rooms. The number of civilians admitted must be reduced to the essential minimum, and only those Royal Australian Air Force personnel required by their duty to enter operations blocks, power houses, bomb stores, &c., should be allowed to do so. All passes should contain a photograph and the signature of the person to whom they are issued.

59. Written orders for all guards and sentries must define when weapons are to be loaded, the correct method of challenge, and when fire should be opened.

#### DENIAL OF AERODROMES OR LANDING GROUNDS TO AN ENEMY.

60. In co-operation with the local Army commander, each commanding officer is responsible for the preparation of complete plans and the issue of detailed instructions for the demolition of aerodromes and landing grounds within his command in accordance with existing policy and instructions.

#### EMERGENCY MOVEMENT FROM AERODROMES AND LANDING GROUNDS.

61. Commanding officers must prepare plans and instructions for movement from aerodromes and landing grounds in an emergency.

62. Arrangements must be made to move or, in the event of occupation by the enemy, to destroy aircraft on the ground; to allocate transport to squadrons and sections; to inform Signals, Equipment, Armament, Medical, Messing and other Sections of the action to be taken by them; to assemble personnel; and to issue the order of march.

63. It is most important for commanding officers to ensure that the issue of instructions for emergency movements is confined to responsible officer personnel, such as squadron, flight and section commanders.

#### TRAINING.

64. It is essential for Air and other officers commanding to ensure that all Royal Australian Air Force units under their command prepare and practice aerodrome defence schemes. All personnel must be trained thoroughly in defence duties and commanding officers must detail the action to be taken by all personnel.

65. Instructions and training are to embrace degrees of readiness and action to be taken—

- (i) In event of an air raid warning.
- (ii) In event of attack.
- (iii) The all clear signal.

66. Lectures are to be given to all officers and other ranks with special emphasis on morale and duties of officers

67. Exercises in defence measures are to be carried out at least once a week. These exercises should include the action to be taken during—

- (i) *High Level Attack*.—Personnel must know and be told in advance where to go to obtain protection. Medical orderlies, stretcher bearers, despatch riders, runners for emergency calls must be detailed for duty.
- (ii) *Low Level Attack*.—Personnel must be trained and detailed to support the aerodrome defence units under the direction of the aerodrome defence officer.
- (iii) *Paratroop Attack*.—Parties must be allocated to the aerodrome and each dispersed area and trained so that they will be capable and ready to attack paratroops should such forces be dropped in the area. The senior Air Force officer present at any area at the time of such an attack is responsible for the local protection of that area.

#### *Ground Attack.*

68. All personnel must be given weapon training and training in minor Military tactics and self defence. Personnel must be trained in the recognition of our own troops, and distinguishing marks should be arranged to guard against the possibility of ground attack by enemy forces wearing our uniforms.

#### *Protection Against Fire and Incendiary Bombs.*

69. All personnel must be instructed in, and practise, the action to be taken in the event of fire and in dealing with incendiary bombs.

#### *Medical Arrangements.*

70. Personnel must be trained in first-aid and as stretcher bearers. All personnel must be competent to use field dressings.

#### *Gas Defence.*

71. All personnel must be thoroughly familiarized in the use of the Service type respirator and receive periodical instruction by the anti-gas instructor.

#### *Action After Raid.*

72. The first duty of the bomb disposal squad is to locate and to mark the positions of all unexploded bombs with red flags.

73. Reconstruction after a raid must be planned and personnel must be trained in reconstruction of camouflage and rapid repair of runways; working parties must also be provided to assist the medical staff if necessary.

#### GENERAL.

74. Care is to be taken by commanding officers to review defence plans from time to time in the light of all available intelligence.

75. When visiting stations, Air officers commanding are to test the standard of training of personnel in their defence duties.

### APPENDIX "A" TO AIR BOARD MEMORANDUM No. 5.

#### WARNING SYSTEM.

#### FOR USE BY THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE IN WAR.

Serial Number.	Warning.	At Stations or Establishments.			At Satellites.		
		How Sounded.	Authority.	Action to be Taken.	How Sounded.	Authority.	Action to be Taken.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
I.	Fire alarm	Ringling of fire bells	Any person observing outbreak of fire	Normal fire-fighting procedure	Long blast on whistles or ringing of bells	Any person observing outbreak of fire	Normal fire-fighting procedure
II.	Prepare for an air raid	Alternating long and short blasts on whistle or siren	Station Commander or Officer in Charge Operation	(a) Man Station Defence Posts (b) Fire piquets and First-aid posts stand by (c) Flying and maintenance personnel to hangars or dispersal areas (d) All personnel "sling" respirators (e) All personnel except those detailed for special duties continue with normal duties but remain at "alert" (f) At night—As above but darken station as far as possible	A series of alternating long and short blasts on whistle	Senior officer present	As in Column (5)

## WARNING SYSTEM—continued.

Serial Number.	Warning.	At Stations or Establishments.			At Satellites.		
		How Sounded.	Authority.	Action to be Taken.	How Sounded.	Authority.	Action to be Taken.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
III.	Attack alarms— (a) Air attack	A series of long blasts of five seconds with two seconds interval on siren	Station Commander or Officer in charge of operations	As for II., adding— (a) non-essential personnel take cover (b) at night—As II., but darken station as far as possible	A series of long blasts on whistle	Senior officer present	As in column (5), but adapted to local conditions
	(b) Ground attack	A series of short blasts on siren	Station Commander or Officer in charge of operations	As for II.	A series of short blasts on whistle	As for III. (a)	As for III.(a)
IV.	Gas alarm	Hand rattles	Gas lookouts or any officer or N.C.O. who detects the presence of gas	(a) All personnel fit respirator face-piece (b) Those in the open apply anti-gas ointments to exposed parts of face and hands (c) All personnel not engaged on essential duties proceed to cover if possible	Hand rattles	Gas lookout or any officer or N.C.O. who detects the presence of gas	As in column (5)
V.	All clear	One blast of two minutes on siren	Station Commander or Officer to whom he has delegated authority	Resume normal duties	Verbal order	Senior officer present	As in column (5)



Minister for the Interior,  
Canberra, A.C.T.

20th April, 1942.

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

I refer to Darwin and Mr. Justice Lowe's Report.

I wrote to you under date 16th April, asking that you should make available to me the transcript of the shorthand notes to which Mr. Justice Lowe refers. Naturally the transcript would be for my personal information only and would not be disclosed to anyone else without your authority, although I do feel that the Administrator is entitled to see certain sections of it.

Unless I have it, it is impossible for me to estimate properly many of the comments upon particular phases of the happenings in Darwin, which the Judge has made.

On Friday last, Mr. Shedden advised the Secretary of my Department that you required my report by Wednesday (22nd April). I immediately repeated my request for a copy of the transcript of evidence. I have not received it; therefore, I now send you only such comments as I feel I can and should make at the moment.

I feel you do understand that, to appreciate fully all that happened on 19th February and subsequently, a knowledge of the general position in Darwin, prior to the raid, is positively essential. It is not possible otherwise to appraise accurately much that appears in the Lowe Report. I have that general knowledge. I have also a complete file of the happenings so far as they concern my Department and the work of the Administrator since the date upon which I became Minister.

I enclose herewith a report furnished to me by the Administrator, the Honorable C. L. A. Abbott, and also one from the Secretary of my Department, Mr. J. A. Carrodus. These were received by me some days ago. I delayed sending them on to you because I felt diffident about commenting myself, until I was more fully informed as to the actual evidence upon which the Lowe Report is based.

From reading the Report, I have received a strong impression that Mr. Justice Lowe bases some of his findings which reflect upon the Administrator on the evidence of one section of the community. His Honour himself speaks of the difficulty of evaluating correctly this evidence. Whilst I would not for one moment desire to champion the Administrator if anything concrete could be proved against him, I do feel, out of ordinary justice to him, that I should tell you that, from the time I became Minister, I received a steady flow of complaint from one section of the Darwin community. Although sweeping accusations were made against the Administrator, none of the accusers ever made any effort to substantiate his charges with sworn statements, although I repeatedly asked that this should be done and promised immediate action upon same. Being personally acquainted with some of the persons complaining, I was definitely of opinion then, and I still am, that the complaints were biased and made with little sense of fairness or responsibility.

May I say, with respect, that I feel that the Administrator effectively disposes of the allegations against him made in the report of the Commissioner.

It will be observed that the Administrator asks that the matter be not left where it is at present. His reputation has been attacked, but he is not given an opportunity of knowing the basis of the Judge's criticism and the persons who have given evidence against him. I feel that he is entitled to have access to the evidence so far as it relates to him personally and that he should be given an opportunity of commenting upon it and also upon the persons giving it.

The position, as it stands at present, is most unsatisfactory to the Government, the Administrator and myself.

On the facts before me, I see no justification for recommending that any action be taken against the Administrator. Rather do I feel that he did a very good job of work in most difficult and trying circumstances.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sgd.) J. S. COLLINGS.

The Right Honorable J. Curtin, M.P.,  
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, A.C.T.



Department of the Interior,  
Canberra, A.C.T.

11th April, 1942.

Senator the Honorable J. S. Collings,  
Minister for the Interior,  
Canberra, A.C.T.

SIR,

AIR RAID ON DARWIN—REPORT BY MR. JUSTICE LOWE.

With reference to this subject, I am submitting a report upon the aspects which concern me. As set out in the communication from the Secretary, Department of Defence Co-ordination, to the Secretary, Department of the Interior, these are under four heads as follow :—

- (1) Lack of confidence and resentment towards the Administrator and use of Police services by the Administrator.
- (2) Conditions which developed in the town after the raid owing to lack of foresight and planning.
- (3) Failure of the Administrator to seek earlier assistance from the military authorities.
- (4) Failure of the civil authorities to properly co-operate with the military authorities.

I must point out the tremendous disadvantage I am placed under in replying to these points which are practically tantamount to charges of neglect of duty. I have very little knowledge of the evidence given and have not been able to see a transcript of such evidence. Moreover, before witnesses gave evidence they were assured that their evidence would be treated as secret and the Commissioner, in stating this, goes on to say "It would be unfair, I think, to those witnesses that the evidence given by them before the Commission should be made available to others than members of the Government without their consent". When I appeared before the Commission on the first time in Melbourne the evidence of certain witnesses which was read to me was quite sufficient for me to see that deliberate and wilful perjury had been committed. One particular witness in Darwin was asked whether he realized the seriousness of the statements he made upon oath. He said he did and continued to commit perjury. Yet this deliberate and malicious lying is privileged. One constable stated that he objected to loading glass and china (the property of the Commonwealth Government) on to a truck on the day of the raid (19th February) when a half caste girl was probably still alive and buried under the wreckage of my Office. Pressed for confirmation he repeated that it was the 19th, and he was supported by another constable. The Government property referred to was in charge of Sergeant 1st Class Littlejohn, one of the outstanding senior officers in the Northern Territory Police Force. I draw attention at this stage to the extraordinary fact that although Sergeant Littlejohn was in Darwin when the Commission took evidence there, he was not called as a witness although he could have most definitely fixed the date as the 21st.

I quote a telegram from the Government Secretary at Alice Springs, dated 6th April, 1942—

Littlejohn returned yesterday confirms glass china silverware code books and confidential papers packed and removed Saturday evening twenty-first February.

This effectively disposes of the lying evidence I have already referred to and which was the reason for my cross examination for hours before the Commissioner. There does not appear to be any reason to think that other evidence against me was any more reliable. The main point about this is that it is absolutely clear that the articles referred to were loaded two days after the raid. It is therefore obvious that the Police were not diverted from other and more pressing duties, which might have been the case if the property had been loaded on the day of the raid. Incidentally, I might state that the glassware, china and silver saved was probably worth £1,000, and it was necessary to place a responsible Police Officer in charge of it and the confidential code books and papers.

When I realized the serious implications of this false evidence I requested the Commissioner to allow me to be represented by counsel, but he refused the request. As I was practically in the position of being an accused person, I consider I should have been afforded what the Commissioner himself describes as "skilled defence".

The Commission reached Darwin on the 5th March, yet my attendance was not requested in Darwin until the 9th March. I replied upon the same day saying that I could not get on the plane to Darwin, and urged the Commissioner to take evidence at Alice Springs where other senior Administration officers besides myself were located. This was not done and with the exception of Superintendent Stretton and Mr. Carrington, no senior Administration officers were called. Officers who could have given responsible evidence were the Government Secretary, Mr. Giles, and the Chief Surveyor, Mr. Miller, who also had been the Chief Warden in Darwin until a few days after the raid on the 19th February. I am under the impression that the evidence of both Superintendent Stretton and Mr. Carrington was definitely favorable to me.

I claim that a very considerable portion of the evidence given before the Commissioner is discredited and I also draw attention to Mr. Justice Lowe's comment given upon page 6 of his report where he states that evidence expressing a lack of confidence and resentment against me came from a particular section and that it was "at least dangerous to draw an inference against the Administrator when an examination of all the relevant evidence which may well cover a lengthy period might lead to a different conclusion".

However, notwithstanding this comment, Mr. Justice Lowe states upon page 11 of his report—"Immediately following the raids the morale of the townspeople was not noticeably affected and there is evidence to show that nothing in the nature of panic developed then. Had there been effective leadership at that stage, I think that normal conditions might very rapidly have been attained, but leadership was conspicuously lacking".

The criticism is surprising to me, and I can only suggest that Judge Lowe was influenced by the weight of the evidence he heard in Darwin, evidence which he himself has stated to a great degree emanated from a section. It was admitted to me by Mr. Barry, K.C., who was assisting the Commissioner, that Superintendent Stretton, in giving evidence had agreed with my evidence that there was not confusion or panic in Darwin and that matters were never out of hand. Judge Lowe has not stated that all telephone communication had ceased and that therefore any necessary action had



to be carried out by personal contact. He does not point out that in the first raid two of my senior officers, the Government Secretary and the Accountant, were both injured and had to be taken to hospital, although the former returned to duty in the afternoon. It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by leadership. It was not possible for me to move up and down the streets urging all people to remain calm. Immediately after the raid they were calm. I also draw attention to further comments by Judge Lowe on the same page where he says that I took action in regard to petrol and that I arranged for a Provost Company to assist the police. These actions show that I was calm and that I was carrying out various duties. The Commissioner refers to telegrams I sent you. I must point out that the great majority of these telegrams were sent after the 21st February, when according to Judge Lowe (page 11), the responsibility for control of the town had passed to the Commandant. Strictly speaking, this was not so, as I controlled the town arrangements with Administration and A.R.P. staff until the 27th February, as set out in my report to you of that date and in which I stated that certain arrangements had been completed with the Commandant. I point this out as another instance that the evidence upon which Judge Lowe has based some of his comments is not accurate even in this respect, and it is most probable that other evidence regarding alleged lack of leadership is equally misleading.

There is a further definite instance of this in His Honour's reference to the sanitary service. It is quite correct that a vehicle used ordinarily for carting rubbish was sent to the Adelaide River with office files and records. This was done without any reference to or instructions from me. The sanitary service did not function because the great majority of the staff had cleared out, and this was one of the reasons why I went to the Adelaide River on the 21st February. I sent both the vehicle and the staff back to Darwin and the service was resumed.

The Commissioner refers to looting upon the night of the 19th, and says that if proper supervision had been exercised, such looting could not have gone on. He has already stated that I made arrangements to supplement police supervision with Provost Corps men. I personally do not think there was a great deal of looting on the night of the 19th, and later on I shall quote a letter from a business man in Darwin which rather confirms this, but if there was any looting, I think it must be attributed to the Provost Corps. For example, I went to Government House on the 20th and arranged to have the debris swept out and the doors and louvres closed. Nothing appeared then to have been taken, but there were definite signs that some persons had been through the house during the night. There were twists of burnt papers in several rooms. In the dining room a brooch of military ribbons was picked up containing amongst others the ribbon of the Military Cross. This was identified as belonging to a Sergeant in the Provost Corps, who was subsequently placed under arrest. I surely cannot be held responsible for the betrayal of their trust by these soldiers.

I say definitely that I consider I exercised my functions as Administrator in every possible way, during and after the raid, and I say that I consider that Judge Lowe's statement that leadership was lacking is not borne out by facts nor by my actions. Evidence was read to me where a witness stated that he saw me after the raid, and that I was not flurried or confused.

The "All Clear" for the second raid was, according to evidence read to me, sounded at 12.40 p.m. My movements from 12.30 p.m. onwards were as set out hereunder:—

- 12.30 Took charge at the Police Office.
- 12.45 Went out to Larrakeyah Barracks to see what arrangements could be made about a train for the remaining women.
- 1.45 Returned to Police Office.
- 2.30 Went to Public Works Yard and gave instructions regarding petrol supplies.
- 2.45 Placed Judge Wells in charge of entraining of evacuees.
- 3.15 Made arrangements regarding feeding of civilians remaining in Darwin.
- 4.00 Had wine and spirits sent away from Government House.
- 4.45 Went to Eastern Cafe, which was feeding civilians and spoke to cooks and men.
- 5.30 Went out to Civil Hospital which had been bombed, went through wards, spoke to patients, nurses and doctors.
- 7.00 Dinner with Commandant and arranged to meet Bank Managers.
- 8.00 Returned to Police Office and received Superintendent Stretton's report that the town was quiet.
- 9.00 Discussed position with Bank Managers and arranged for them to leave Darwin with their securities.
- 9.45 Walked through portion of town to Railway Station with Judge Wells to see about further trains. Returned through town which was quiet and in darkness to Police Office.
- 11.45 Was driven out to Commandant's House by Sergeant Littlejohn after Superintendent Stretton had again reported to me that all was quiet.

I venture to say that this schedule of movements, which is absolutely correct, shows that I was in full control of the position, and that there was no confusion. Superintendent Stretton was in charge of his police and was upon duty all night. He was assisted by Sergeant 1st Class Littlejohn. The police reported to the Superintendent at regular intervals, and he reported to me frequently that all was quiet. This confirmed my own impression when I walked through the town with Judge Wells.

Evidence was read to me which showed that certain police officers had stated that matters were not normal on the night of the 19th. This evidence was given by a police sergeant and by one or, perhaps, two constables. To the best of my recollection, these police were not on duty that night, but they failed grossly in their duty if anything happened that they were aware of and they either took no action themselves or did not report the occurrences, either to the Superintendent or to the Sergeant. They could have even reported to me, as I was at the Police Station until midnight. The fact that no such report was made makes it clear to me that there were no disturbances and that this is another instance where evidence is unreliable.

The Commissioner in his concluding paragraph upon page 11 says that I was not fully acquainted with the conditions which were developing and adds that the telegrams I sent to you failed to give any idea of the conditions. I sent a telegram to you on the 19th which read—

Severe damage official section town. Some civilian casualties including women telephonists. All women out today. Spirit of male civilians good.

The statements in this telegram are confirmed by Judge Lowe on page 11, where he states that "the morale of the townspeople was not noticeably affected, &c." Evidently this telegram is not criticised. Further telegrams were sent to you and to the Secretary of the Department, but these were sent after I returned from the Adelaide River and none would be before the 24th February.



On page 11 Judge Lowe writes "On Saturday, 21st February, the Commandant of the 7th Military District appointed Major Anderson as Town Major and thenceforward the town has been governed in accordance with the directions of the Military Commandant."

It would therefore seem to me that the telegrams referred to which were sent after the 21st can have no bearing upon the position, nor should they affect His Honour's views, as according to him, the town was under military control from the 21st. As a matter of fact, I exercised control up to the 28th with the Commandant's knowledge and concurrence. This is another instance where His Honour is misled by incorrect evidence and therefore his conclusions are not based upon actual fact.

General Blake had dinner and luncheon with me in Darwin between the 24th and 26th and our relations were thorough and cordial. We naturally discussed the town organization and were both quite satisfied.

On page 11 the Commissioner states that there was no adequate foresight of what might result after a raid. He refers again to this at the bottom of page 15 and upon the top of page 16. He says "It is not an easy thing to improvise successfully measures to meet such a situation, and the attempt to do so in this case was inadequate and a failure." There is a condemnation here which I emphatically combat for the following reasons.

The duty of the civil administration in a crisis such as this was to preserve order, keep up food and keep essential services running. As early as 12.30 p.m. on the day of the raid, before the "All Clear" had sounded, I had asked and had been assured by the Works Director, Mr. Stoddart, that he would be able to keep the water and the electric light and power going in most areas. Police were promptly posted to their duties which were clearly defined by Superintendent Stretton in his evidence before the Commissioner. These included the removal of dead to the morgue and of wounded to the hospital. The police collected women for evacuation by train. They guarded bank securities until these left Darwin and carried out other duties. Before 12.30 p.m., I had conferred with the Commandant and had received a report from the Government Secretary, before he went to hospital and also from the Superintendent of Police and from the Permanent Air Raids Officer, Mr. Harrison. All these reports indicated that duties were being carried out properly. Later on I placed Judge Wells in charge of entraining, and I arranged that food should be cooked and served to all remaining civilians. Through police motor cyclists, I received regular reports of A.R.P. activities at Parap and elsewhere.

In this connexion, I am unable to follow the Commissioner's statement upon page 11 "that this difference prevented the police being aided by officers of the A.R.P. in preserving law and order after the raid". His Honour could not have been aware that the Chief Warden, Mr. Miller, with other wardens, worked continuously at Parap on the day of the raid, the night following, and the next day. Most unfortunately, Mr. Miller was not asked to give evidence. He would have shown that he and his wardens worked with the police all the time.

So that it can be made quite clear that I took all possible steps to check disorder and to get matters upon a normal basis I quote hereunder a letter I received from Mr. Lawrance of the Darwin firm of Weedon & Lawrance, dated the 25th February. It will be remembered that the Commissioner has stated that Darwin was under military control from the 21st February. The letter is as follows:—

It is regretted that I am forced through circumstances to inform you of the looting which is taking place in Darwin. Naturally, I am aware of the activities you must be engaged in endeavouring to stop this controlled military robbing of citizens' property, but I would venture to say that your good work becomes futile when Officers of the Army assist their personnel by allowing military vehicles to be used for the conveyance of stolen goods.

To date my firm, Weedon & Lawrance Ltd., has lost at least £250 worth of goods. This amount is extremely light as I am remaining on guard over our property as much as possible. I have safeguarded it at what I may rightly term "the Risk of my Life".

Now, Sir, I do not wish to do more than notify you of our losses, but I do wish to elaborate on the unfair conditions of citizens.

A large number of citizens have remained in Darwin, and the majority of them have endeavoured to carry out your slogan "Work as Usual". This slogan is certainly necessary, but many citizens return home from duty, after carrying out their duties at, say, the wharf or the Royal Australian Air Force, only to find that the military have removed such items as refrigerators, food stuffs, &c., and this immediately forces these men to imagine their work is not appreciated and they naturally decide to leave Darwin.

A practical demonstration I may mention is that of Mr. L. Elliot, foreman painter at the Royal Australian Air Force. Last night he returned from his job to find everything he possessed gone, even his refrigerator and his food.

This man has decided to leave Darwin and his services will be sadly missed, as he is one of the few men here who could efficiently handle a large gang of camouflage painters. Owing to such cases, may I suggest that an officer be appointed to handle the citizens reports of such cases, so that either their goods are returned, or a record made so that compensation can be made for the loss that these citizens, who have stayed behind, have incurred.

I do not know whether Mr. Lawrance gave evidence before the Commissioner. I have quoted this letter because it seems to me I had shown leadership and had imbued Darwin citizens and business people with the desire to return to normal business as soon as possible. It also appears to me that the letter indicates that there was control of the town with civilian instrumentalities.

When Major-General Blake saw me immediately after the first raid on the 19th, I suggested to him that a military picket should be placed across the road south of the town to prevent the civilians streaming out. I do not think that this was done. However, this was not a vital matter as both General Blake and I knew we could get control of the civilians who had left Darwin at the Adelaide River Railway Station. I also held the view that it would be better to allow civilians to get out of the town in case there were further and more ferocious air raids on the following days after the 19th. I desired, however, that responsible and influential citizens should remain in Darwin and this is the reason why I endeavoured to get in touch with the Union Secretary, Mr. Ryan. I found, however, that he had gone.

In levelling criticism in reference to alleged lack of leadership, I assume that the Commissioner has in mind the fact that civilians left the town in cars, on bicycles and by foot. Apparently he considers these men should have been stopped. The civilians could only have been prevented from leaving Darwin by orders from and action by the Military



Commandant. The townspeople were confused and undoubtedly many of them were told by unauthorized persons to leave the town. Similar confusion even existed in disciplined troops, and I therefore say emphatically that no one could have stemmed the rush. In any case, the Administrator had no legal power to prevent civilians leaving Darwin.

I refer you to the Commissioner's report (page 12) where he comments upon the happenings at the Royal Australian Air Force station. He says—"Many of the men simply took to the bush. Some were found as far afield as Batchelor, some at Adelaide River, one was found at Daly Waters, and another, by an extreme feat, reached Melbourne in thirteen days. The Air Station itself was practically deserted. For several days afterwards men were straggling back to the Station, and at a parade on the 23rd February, the muster showed 278 men missing. As the casualties were very small, the result can only be regarded as deplorable".

I therefore again repeat that it is unfair to saddle me with the responsibility of keeping civilians in check and in Darwin.

I consider that the course I did take was a much better one. Two days after the raid I went down to the Adelaide River and, with the assistance of the Military authorities, had the men drafted off, fed, and returned to Darwin. Owing to the various authorities functioning in Darwin it was not possible for me to direct personally that men return to their various jobs and duties. I did, however, make sure that there was sufficient food for the men, if they did go back to work.

In connexion with this subject I draw your attention to the following statement from the Commissioner which appears upon page 12. He says "There remained about 1,100 male civilians, of whom it was anticipated some 400 might be absorbed for the purpose of carrying out necessary works. These civilians were placed in camps and supplied with food by the Military authorities. The responsibility for their evacuation lay, I think, after the 21st February at latest, with the Military authorities".

Once again the foregoing statement shows that the Commissioner is confused regarding dates. The feeding of civilians at that time was carried out by A.R.P. personnel under my supervision up to the time I left Darwin (about 2nd March). It had been arranged, prior to the raid, that owing to the shortage of civilian food stocks in Darwin, supplies in bulk would be made available by the Army. The Army Service Corps supplied food in bulk to my head-quarters (the Lands and Surveys Branch), but the actual issuing of rations was carried out by civilian personnel. The *Army News* issues for the week commencing 22nd February, will show notices over my name instructing civilians to fill in ration cards. I mention this to show how hopelessly the Commissioner's statements are out of accordance with established facts. This can only be due to unreliable evidence.

In his final paragraph upon page 16 the Commissioner commented as follows:—"The Army had co-operated with the Civil authorities in the preparation of a plan for A.R.P. which, so far as I can judge, was well calculated to carry out its purpose. Unfortunately, however, this plan was not implemented but was modified by action taken by the Administrator late in December, 1941. The evidence does not enable me to determine whether the Administrator's view that this modification was rendered necessary by change of circumstances which had arisen, is correct or not".

This paragraph appears to me to contradict itself, as the Commissioner says he has not sufficient evidence to show whether the action I took was correct or not. Once again the Commissioner appears to have faulty and unreliable evidence which has caused him to confuse action taken by me in connexion with the evacuation of women from Darwin in December and January with the Air Raids Precautions Plans. A plan for Air Raids Precautions had been prepared in conjunction with the Army authorities in Darwin. This was never altered or interfered with by me. What I did was to put a senior officer in charge of the organization for the evacuation of women and children from Darwin which took place from about the 19th December until the end of January. I sent the Acting Government Secretary with his full staff of clerks and typists to assist the Air Raids Precautions organization which was unable to cope with the work. This was, as I have said, in connexion with the evacuation of women and children and had nothing to do with Air Raids Precautions.

In regard to alleged differences between me and the Air Raids Precautions organization I am going to quote from a report made to me by the Chief Warden, Mr. Miller, early in March last. This extract shows very clearly where the criticism arose and it is also an answer to the comments made by police and others regarding the lack of slit trenches referred to by the Commissioner upon page 12. Judge Wells' comments and criticisms effectively stopped any voluntary efforts to dig slit trenches and requisitions upon the Works Branch for the work to be done were issued. Shortage of labour prevented this work being carried out. I now quote from Mr. Miller's report and once again must say that it is inexplicable to me why this officer, who, as previously stated was Chief Warden from the inception of the Air Raids Precautions organization until after the raid, was not called upon to give evidence:—

About 23rd December, 1941, I received a long report from Judge Wells criticising many points of Air Raids Precautions practice, particularly the recommendation that every householder should have a slit trench away from buildings, that too much stress was placed upon the methods of dealing with incendiary bombs, and that the Air Raids Precautions was an illegal body acting without an Ordinance.

The report was referred to the Administrator who referred that part dealing with legality to the Crown Law Officer. In the meantime the report was made public and had damaging results in that the Air Raids Precautions was pointed out as having no legality and that furthermore protective trenches were useless.

The effect upon the Air Raids Precautions itself was that representatives of various groups issued an ultimatum that if an Ordinance was not forthcoming in three days they would resign in a body. I do not know who instigated this move but I think it was the direct result of the Judge's letter. As the Crown Law Officer was away from Darwin no reply was forthcoming and the Wardens resigned as they had threatened. This happened about the end of January . . . . .

I suggest also that the précis of the correspondence in connexion with Air Raids Precautions organization prepared by your Departmental Officers from the official files be studied.

Before I conclude this lengthy report I desire to recapitulate the specific charges I consider I have to answer. These are (i) lack of confidence in the Administrator and use of police services by him; (ii) conditions which developed in Darwin after the raid; (iii) failure of Administrator to seek earlier assistance from the Military authorities; and (iv) failure of civil authorities to properly co-operate with military authorities.



In regard to (i) it seems to me that there is nothing to answer. The Commissioner himself says that the evidence was sectional and that it would be dangerous to draw inferences upon partial evidence. He endorses my action in regard to taking liquor away. Now that it is definitely shown by Sergeant Littlejohn that the Government's property at Government House, Darwin, was packed and taken away on the 21st and not on the 19th, the day of the raid, as was alleged by some lying and unscrupulous witnesses, I consider my action there was also entirely justifiable. In any case, there does not appear to be any stricture by the Commissioner. I will deal with (ii) later. In regard to (iii) and (iv) I do not follow the Commissioner's comments. The Commandant saw me immediately after the raid and we discussed the position. In the afternoon he sent Major Anderson in to assist me (two days before he was appointed Town Major). I stayed with General Blake on the nights of the 19th and 20th and had frequent discussions with him. We both agreed to the appointment of a Town Major and General Blake co-operated in every possible way in regard to rationing and other matters. After the Government brought the National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations into force, General Blake and I agreed upon a common plan and I then left Darwin for Alice Springs in the beginning of March.

If there was a weak link it was in the Provost Corps, both in numbers and calibre. The Commissioner refers to the non-guarding of hotels. He surely must have had it in evidence that this was done by the Provost Corps. I personally visited Provost Guards at the Darwin Hotel, the Don Hotel and at certain stores.

It appears to me that I have dealt very fully with the question of leadership or alleged lack of it on earlier pages of this report.

I reported fully to you on the 27th February last on the circumstances of the air raid and the actions I had taken during and after it and you were good enough to send me the undermentioned telegram:—

Please let Justice Lowe see your report dated 27th February regarding raid. Congratulations your excellent work.

Having received this commendation from you it was a most unpleasant shock to me when I went to Melbourne to give evidence to find that false and wicked evidence had been given against me. It is most difficult to deal with charges of this kind when the evidence is not available for perusal and the witness has given his evidence in complete security and without being subjected to any cross examination. The Commissioner has made so many comments which are obviously based upon incorrect or untruthful evidence that I feel further action must be taken.

I have a long record of public service including a period as a Commonwealth Minister of State. I am too proud of my record to allow it to be besmirched by perjurers without availing myself of every possible avenue of vindication.

It appears to me to be unthinkable that a most important Inquiry as this should have been conducted in such a manner. Instead of helpful information being elicited it seems that various witnesses used the Commission as a means to ventilate their spleen upon me for doing my duty as Administrator. It also seems to me that no effort was made by the counsel assisting the Commissioner to rebut or check this evidence and that the functions of Mr. Barry, K.C., so far as I was concerned, became those of a Public Prosecutor. There appears to have been little if any attempt to cross examine witnesses who made such damaging and malicious statements about me and I was refused the right to be represented by counsel when I saw what the position was. Hardly any senior Officers of the Administration were called and I cannot understand why such important witnesses as the Government Secretary and the Chief Warden were not called. It is worth remarking that the two senior Officers who were called, Superintendent Stretton and Mr. V. G. Carrington, rebutted previous evidence against me and one would think that the policy of obtaining further responsible evidence would have been pursued. In Darwin only comparatively junior police officers were called and not senior officers such as Sergeants First Class Bridgland and Littlejohn who were in Darwin during the raid and afterwards.

I recently received a letter from the Managing Editor of one of the largest morning newspapers in Australia. He writes—

Certainly the accounts that I have had of the Darwin raid from independent sources have all spoken most highly of the work which you did, both before, during and after the raid.

These independent sources apparently were not called in evidence before the Commissioner who, I repeat with the utmost deference, has apparently been misled by malicious and unscrupulous persons. I do not admit that I failed in the performance of my duties, I do not admit that I failed to show any qualities of leadership and I refuse to accept the findings of the Commissioner so far as I am concerned.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd.) C. L. A. ABBOTT,

Administrator of the Northern Territory.



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Memorandum :

The Minister—

The Administrator has prepared a report addressed to you in regard to the allegations made against him in the report of Mr. Justice Lowe.

2. A copy of the Commission's report was received by me from the Secretary, Department of Defence Co-ordination, who asked that urgent attention be given to matters mentioned therein which affect this Department and that I supply my comments for consideration of War Cabinet.

3. I was also asked to state what corrective action has been taken where this is indicated to be necessary and the measures adopted or proposed in regard to any person who is considered to have failed in his duty.

4. The only matters in the Commission's report affecting this Department are the statements on pages 11, 12 and 15 which really are a reflection on the actions taken by the Administrator before and after the raid.

5. By virtue of Section 4 of the Northern Territory Administration Act, the Administrator is in control of the administration of the Northern Territory subject to direction by the Minister. Naturally a very large portion of the routine administration is conducted between the Administrator and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, but the Administrator is not subject to control by the Secretary. Any action that it might be considered necessary to take if the Administrator failed in his duty is a matter for the Minister and not for the Secretary of the Department.

6. In commenting on Mr. Justice Lowe's report I am in the same position as the Administrator in that I have no access to the transcript of evidence, I do not know the statements made to the Commission on which the Judge has arrived at his findings, and what is more important I do not know the persons who have given evidence against the Administrator.

7. On page 6 of the Commission's report reference is made to evidence given by witnesses who were antagonistic towards the Administrator but the Judge stated that it was dangerous to draw an inference on this partial evidence. It would be interesting to know, therefore, on what evidence he has actually based his findings which reflect upon the Administrator.

8. It is unfortunate that the Government Secretary and the Chief Air Warden (the Chief Surveyor of the Territory) were not called by the Commission, and that the Administrator did not have an opportunity of giving evidence until the Commission had left the Territory.

9. The official reports received by the Department from the Administrator do not indicate that he failed in his duty and that he lost control from the date of the raid until he left Darwin. He was in Darwin during the raid on 19th February and remained there until the 21st, when he went to Adelaide River (76 miles from Darwin and connected by rail and road) to deal with evacuees. He returned to Darwin on the 23rd and remained there until 2nd March.

10. Prior to the raid the Administrator had arranged for the evacuation of practically the whole of the women and children, and had removed to places south of Darwin all branches of the Administration which were not required in the war effort. At the time of the raid he only had in Darwin his head-quarters staff and essential officers of other branches and the police. I do not think this indicates that no prior plans had been prepared as alleged by the Commissioner.

11. As regards Air Raids Precautions work, there was a difference of opinion between the Administrator and Judge Wells and a section of the community in regard to the powers of wardens and the control of Air Raids Precautions work. As a matter of fact the Administrator actually had no powers at all in regard to Air Raids Precautions work. The Minister's powers under National Security (General) Regulations 35 had been delegated to the Commandant, as far as can be ascertained, early in the year if not during 1941, and on representations made to the Department of Defence Co-ordination by this Department, powers under Regulation 33 were delegated to the Commandant on 31st January, 1942. From that date the Commandant had power to take all necessary action in regard to lighting restriction and the control of persons.

12. I consider that the Administrator in his report to you has effectively disposed of the allegations made against him in Mr. Justice Lowe's report.

13. This Department naturally does not know in detail what action the Administrator took during the raid and afterwards. The official communications received from the Administrator, however, indicate that he did everything that was humanly possible in the circumstances and that he remained at his post even after the control of Darwin had been placed under the Military Commandant.

14. In my opinion, there is no justification whatever for any disciplinary action against the Administrator. On the other hand, I consider that he is entitled to be given access to the transcript of evidence so that he may know what evidence was given against him and the persons who gave such evidence. If, as alleged by the Administrator, some persons, including junior members of the Police Force, have committed perjury, they should not be protected at the expense of the reputation of the Administrator.

(Sgd.) J. A. CARRODUS,  
Secretary.

13th April, 1942.