DEPARTMENT OF
TOURISM AND CULTURE

Northern Territory Library

Explore NT History Cyclone Tracy Resources Package

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LIBRARY

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

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Cyclone Tracy

1974

Cyclone Tracy in 1974 was one of Australia's worst natural disasters and led to its greatest peacetime evacuation and reconstruction effort. It's the event that put Darwin on the map while nearly wiping it off it.

1. The day Tracy came to town

Image 1A: 1A_NTL-PH0377-0113.jpg

Cyclone Tracy damage in the northern suburbs of Darwin, 30 December 1974. Beat Eiselman Photographer: Northern Territory Library Coburg Collection PH0377/0113

While Darwin had already experienced major cyclones in 1897 and 1937, none were more catastrophic than Cyclone Tracy. Destroying more than 90 per cent of Darwin's buildings, it reshaped the development, architecture and memory of the city.

Link

Explore the Digital NTL Cyclone Tracy Collection
http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/jspui/handle/10070/10/

2. The old Darwin

Image 2: 2_NTL-PH0377-0113.jpg

Aerial view of Darwin. 26 February 1969. Northern Territory Library Coburg Collection PH0377/0138

In the early 1970s, Darwin was a relaxed tropical city of 48,000 people. Its rapid expansion meant that many new houses were inadequately constructed and poorly equipped to withstand the cyclones and storms which regularly occur during the wet season.

Additional images:

Image 2A: 2A_NTL-PH0095-0102.jpg

Parer Drive from the water tower, 1977. Northern Territory Library Northern Territory Government Photographer Collection PH0095/0102

Image 2B: 2B_NTL-PH0092-0276.jpg

Parap Pool, 1960. Geoff & Lois Helyar Photographers. Northern Territory Library Lois & Geoff Heyler Collection PH0092/0276

3. When Tracy turned

Image 3: 3_NTL-PH0366-0024.jpg

Radar picture taken at the Northern Territory Meteorological Bureau (Darwin) of Cyclone Tracy, 25 December 1974. Northern Territory Library Tom Lewis Collection PH0366/0024

Early on 20 December 1974, a tropical low formed in the Arafura Sea about 700 kilometres northeast of Darwin. Its forecasted track was out to sea, away from the coast. Residents continued arrangements for Christmas, ill-prepared for what was to come. On the morning of 24 December 1974, the cyclone radically changed direction and headed straight for Darwin.

Link

Bureau of Meteorology: Path of Cyclone Tracy
http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/tracy.shtml

4. Damage

Image 4A: 4A_NTL-PH0095-0101.jpg

Cyclone Damage, Parer Drive, c1974. Northern Territory Library Northern Territory Government Photographer Collection PH0095/0101 [Croppped]

By late afternoon on 24 December 1974, Darwin was covered by heavy clouds, with strong winds and torrential rain. In the next few hours the winds intensified as residents took shelter. It was the last time they would see their neighbourhoods intact.

5. Tracy's wrath

Image 5: 5_NTL-PH0016-0125.jpg

Wagaman after Cyclone Tracy, 1976. Joe Karlhuber Photographer: Northern Territory Library Northern Territory Depart. of the Housing & Construction Collection PH0016-0125

Over the next six hours, winds reached at least 217 kilometres per hour before the wind speed measurement equipment itself was destroyed. At least 255mm of rain fell in just 12 hours.

Audio

Audio5: AV5_NTL-10070-254540.mp3

Terry Hull Christmas Day 1974 Northern Territory Library Cyclone Tracy Collection 10070/2545400

Video

Video5: AV5A_NTL-10070-253017.mp4

Our house was blowing away around us. Brian Price. Recorded 2014. Northern Territory Library Cyclone Tracy Collection 10070/253017

Links

Bureau of Meteorology Report on Cyclone Tracy
http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/pdf/tracy.pdf

ABC radio broadcast featuring Mike Hayes (National Film and Sound Archive)
https://aso.gov.au/titles/radio/cyclone-tracy-1974/notes/

Newsreel of the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B89wBGydSvs

6. Loss of life

Image 7: 6_NTL-PH0377-0114.jpg

Cyclone damaged sailing boats at the Darwin Sailing club, 1974: Northern Territory Library Coburg Collection PH0377/0114

Cyclone Tracy killed at least 66 people. Most of them were killed under collapsed houses, by flying debris, or were lost at sea. For many survivors, the experience was so traumatic they cannot talk about it to this day.

Download

Document 6: D6_NTL-10070-299277.pdf

Inquest into the deaths of crew members from the Booya and Darwin Princess Greg Cavenagh Coroner, 2004. 10070/299277

7. No power or water

Image 7: 7_NTL-PH0149-0700.jpg

Electricity pole, bent and twisted by Cyclone Tracy, 1975. Bert Wiedermann Photographer: Northern Territory Library Bert Wiedermann Collection PH0611/0003

In the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Tracy, Darwin was left without power, water or communications. Health services were overwhelmed and with no shelter or sanitation, the town faced the threat of disease outbreaks.

Download

Document 7: D7_NTL-10070-264357.pdf
The Northern Territory News Emergency Edition December 26, 1974

8. 30,000 homeless

Image 8: 8_NTL-PH0611-0020.jpg
Registration Centre after Cyclone Tracy, 1974. Bert Wiedermann Photographer: Northern Territory Library Bert Wiedermann Collection PH0611/0020

The majority of Darwin's population was homeless. Planning immediately began for the largest civil evacuation in Australian history. This image was taken at Casuarina High School, the registration centre for evacuation.

Audio

Audio 8: AV8_NTL-10070-254544.mp3
The evacuation – Recorded by Jeff Casey 2014. Northern Territory Library Cyclone Tracy Collection 10070/254544

Link

Explore the Evacuation Lists in Digital NTL
http://hdl.handle.net/10070/20070

9. Record-breaking flight

Image 9: 9_NAA-A6180-7-1-75-54.jpg
Evacuees boarding a TAA plane at Darwin following Cyclone Tracy, 1974. National Archives of Australia. - Natural disasters - Cyclones - A6180, 7/1/75/54

More than 35,000 people were evacuated from Darwin in the week after Cyclone Tracy, by air and by road. One Boeing 747 flight had a record-breaking 674 people crammed on board. It is estimated that as many as 60 per cent of evacuees never returned to Darwin. Image: National Archives of Australia

Link

Explore the Red Cross list of evacuees passing through Katherine
http://hdl.handle.net/10070/232798

10. The response

Image 10: 10_PH0095-0027.jpg

Alan Stretton and view from Travelodge balcony, 1975. Northern Territory Library Northern Territory Government Photographer Collection PH0095/0027

As Director of the National Disasters Organisation, Major-General Alan Stretton (pictured) arrived in Darwin late on Christmas Day to coordinate the emergency response. Police, including many from interstate, the Navy and volunteer organisations assisted with the clean-up and re-establishment of essential services.

11. Rebuilding

Image 11: 11_NTL_PH0218-0006.jpg

Meeting of the Darwin Reconstruction Committee, 16 December 1977. Northern Territory Library V. & J. O'Brien Collection PH0218-0006

In February 1975, the Darwin Reconstruction Commission was established, tasked with rebuilding the city. It coordinated the construction and repair of more than 2,500 homes in just three years at a cost of more than $150 million.

12. A helping hand

Image 12: 12_NTL-PH0149-0700.jpg

Marie Louise Quong modelling at Fund raising luncheon at the Travelodge after Cyclone Tracy, 1975: Northern Territory Library Joy Collins Collection PH0149/0700

The fundraising efforts of Australians raised more than $8 million to assist the people of Darwin, including over $100,000 raised by the small town of Alice Springs. Pictured is one of the fundraising events held in Darwin at the Travelodge. The Travelodge survived the cyclone, albeit with a few cars in the swimming pool.

Link

NT PFES Drum Cyclone Tracy Edition 1994
http://hdl.handle.net/10070/265123

13. Resilience

Image 13: 13_NTL-PH0244-0039.jpg
Living in Darwin after Cyclone Tracy: Bill and Polly Day at their van corner of McMinn Street, 26 December 1974: Northern Territory Library Rob Wesley-Smith Collection PH0244/0039

While the trauma of Cyclone Tracy has never left many Darwin residents, the cyclone led to the introduction of improved building codes across Australia.

Link

Nimara School Magazine 1975
http://hdl.handle.net/10070/248955

14. Dig Deeper and Discover More

Territory Stories

Search our specialist digital collection featuring rare images, manuscripts, maps, newspapers and audiovisual materials relating to the Cyclone Tracy

Places of interest

Click here to reveal a map of places of interest you might like to visit relating to the Bombing of Darwin.

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

www.magnt.net.au

Featuring moving imagery, powerful sound and interactive elements, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory is the home of the much-loved Cyclone Tracy exhibition.

Christ Church Cathedral

http://christchurchcathedral.org.au/

Rebuilt in 1977 following Cyclone Tracy, Christ Church Cathedral incorporates elements of the old cathedral within a modern design. It also features the Cyclone Tracy Memorial Window designed by George Chaloupka which pays tribute to those lost at sea.

Palmerston Town Hall

https://northernterritory.com/darwin-and-surrounds/see-and-do/town-hall-ruins-darwin

Visit the ruins of Darwin's first town hall. Built in 1883, the building was destroyed during Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and now stands as a memorial to the city's early colonial days and its history of destruction.

Cyclone Tracy Commemorative Sculpture

http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/disaster/storms/display/80258-cyclone-tracy-memorial

This sculpture at Casuarina Senior College commemorates the cyclone's victims. It is constructed from twisted girders from the home of Sergeant Kevin Malley which was destroyed in the storm.

Cyclone Tracy Memorial

http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/disaster/storms/display/80124-cyclone-tracy-memorial

Darwin's Civic Centre features a memorial plaque commemorating those who lost their lives during Cyclone Tracy in December 1974.

Discover LibrariesNT

https://ntl.on.worldcat.org/discovery

Search our catalogue for more resources on Cyclone Tracy. Expand your search to Libraries World Wide to find even more resources.

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File Manifest

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NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

This Cyclone Tracy Resources Package contains the following files as a zip package:

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In the following table the Item reference refers to the reference to the item in context in this document. The Package File Name is the name of the file that contains the digital version of this item in this zip file. File naming convention consist of

X#X_XXX-IDENTIFIER.xxx

- X Type identifier (Optional). None - image, D - Document
- # The section number containing the item reference in this document
- X The suborder of the item in that section (where more than one item)
- XXX Code for the collecting institution which owns the original of the item
- IDENTIFIER An identifier for the item in the collection
- .xxx File extension denoting the file type

Item reference	Package File Name
This document	Explore_NT_History_Cyclone_Tracy_20180522.pdf
Image 1A	1A_NTL-PH0377-0113.jpg (Image 1 is a cropped version of this image)
Image 2	2_NTL-PH0377-0138.jpg
Image 2A	2A_NTL-PH0095-0102.jpg
Image 2B	2B_NTL-PH0092-0276.jpg
Image 3	3_NTL-PH0366-0024.jpg
Image 4	4A_NTL-PH0095-0101.jpg (Image 4 is a cropped version of this image)
Image 5	5_NTL-PH0026-0125.jpg
Audio 5	AV5_NTL-10070-254540.mp3
Video 5	AV5A_NTL-10070-253017.mp4
Image 6	6_NTL-PH0377-0114.jpg
Document 6	D6_NTL-10070-29927.jpg
Image 7	7_NTL-PH0611-0003.jpg
Document 7	D7_NTL-10070-264357.pdf
Image 8	8_NTL-PH0611-0212.jpg
Audio 8	AV8_NTL-10070-254544.mp3
Image 9	9_NAA-A6180-7-1-75-54.jpg
Image 10	10_NTL-PH0095-0027.jpg
Image 11	11_NTL-PH0218-0006.jpg
Image 12A	12A_NTL-PH0149-0700.jpg
Image 13	13_NTL-PH0244-0039.jpg

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