Media Release

Willem Westra van Holthe, Member for Katherine
Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

The Bombing of Katherine remembered

22 March 2015

The Katherine community has come together today to mark the 73rd anniversary of the Bombing of Katherine, shining a light on the Territory’s important military history.

Member for Katherine Willem Westra van Holthe said up to 91 Japanese bombs rained down on the town on March 22nd, 1942.

“It’s hard to fathom today the absolute fear that must have been felt by Katherine residents as the bombs dropped,” Willem Westra van Holthe said.

“Local man Dodger Kodjalwal was killed during the air raid. It’s thought the 42 year old was crouching behind a rock at the old airfield when he died.

“Very few people realise the Japanese air raids went that far south. The bombs left a trail of destruction across the community, with some of the damage still visible out at the old aerodrome site today,” he said.

Katherine has a rich defence history which dates back to the headquarters of the 2/1st North Australia Observer Unit of World War II being located in the town.

Today, that tradition continues with the Royal Australian Air Force Base Tindal fully operational, along with the Army’s North-West Mobile Force which also has a detachment at the base.

“The Country Liberals Government is proud of its strong commitment to our Defence community and we need to do everything we can to recognise the contributions made by our defence personnel to ensure they are properly recognised,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“The community is just as supportive, as seen yesterday when hundreds turned out in Darwin to honour those who have served in Afghanistan as part of Operation Slipper.”
“It was wonderful to see our Troops welcomed home and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. As a Government, we place a high priority on recognising the contribution our defence force makes to the community.”

Mr Westra van Holthe said work was already underway on the planning of the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Katherine in 2017.

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