

26 April 2005

Cyclone Tracy

It's 30 years since one of Australia's worst natural disasters - Cyclone Tracy.

MURRAY MCLAUGHLIN: Morrie Maloney now lives in Queensland. He returned to Darwin this week to check out the city he was living in 30 years ago when Cyclone Tracy wrecked the place.

His old **neighbourhood** of Alawa, 15 minutes from the **central business district**, is green and **serene** these days.

On Christmas Day 1974, Alawa and most of the city was flattened.

MORRIE MALONEY: You couldn't drive a car down the street. There was just rubble everywhere - roofing iron, timber, bits of houses, fibro.

MURRAY MCLAUGHLIN: Morrie Maloney's house was **blown** apart like the rest of his street. His **tale** of his **survival** as his house **collapsed** is as **prosaic** as thousands of others.

MORRIE MALONEY: We got the two children, then we put them in a cupboard. But then a bit later on it got worse, so we went up into the hallway, got a mattress out and put it on the floor, so we sat there.

MURRAY MCLAUGHLIN: Morrie Maloney's family were among 25,000 residents who were **flown** out of Darwin in the week after the cyclone - the biggest airlift since World War II. Another 10,000 left by road. The evacuation was directed by Major-General Allan Stretton, who had just been appointed to head the new Natural Disasters Organisation.

MAJOR-GENERAL ALLAN STRETTON: We had 45,000 people in the ruins of Darwin with no water, no reticulated water, no electricity, no sewerage and a great danger of an outbreak of cholera and other diseases.

MURRAY MCLAUGHLIN: Qantas was at first reluctant to join the airlift out of Darwin.

MAJOR-GENERAL ALLAN STRETTON: Qantas sent a senior pilot up. He had a look at the airfield, which was still pretty ropery, and **came** to the conclusion that it **wasn't on** to fly a jumbo jet out. I then showed him some of the refugees - women and children - still in a state of shock, and he then virtually changed his mind and decided it was worth the risk.

JOHN MEDCALF: We just filled **every possible nook and cranny** that we could on the aircraft.

The mothers - I just remember the mothers, who probably really **understood** what was happening. You can just imagine - "Am I going to have a home again? Am I going to have to start all over again?"

MURRAY MCLAUGHLIN: Darwin's official wind recording instrument had been destroyed at 3am when there was a gust of 217km/h. This new instrument should withstand speeds up to 370km/h. And the weather office now has sophisticated computer modelling and receives better satellite and radar pictures.

JIM ARTHUR (BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY): All this enables us to more accurately pick the current position, pick the current movement, pick the future movement. Mind you, the performance that we provided 30 years ago for Tracy was very good at that time.

MURRAY MCLAUGHLIN: Morrie Maloney will be joining other Cyclone Tracy survivors for a commemoration tomorrow night.

MORRIE MALONEY: The time thing's before or after Tracy. So yeah, there's a bit of emotion tied up with it, that's for sure.

story notes

neighbourhood

A **neighbourhood** is an area in a town and the group of people who live in that area.

central business district

The **central business district** is the commercial area of a city. It's where most of the offices and other big buildings are. Central Business District is often abbreviated to the initials **CBD**.



serene

calm

blown

Blown is the past participle of the irregular verb **blow**.

more information: [blow](#)

tale

A **tale** is a story.

survival

Survival refers to the act of staying alive.

collapsed

fell down



prosaic

Prosaic means ordinary or dull. We could also say 'straightforward' or 'matter of fact'.

flown

Flown is the past participle of the irregular verb **fly**.

more information: [fly](#)

came

Came is the past tense of the irregular verb **come**.

more information: [come](#)

wasn't on

was not possible; was not safe

every possible nook and cranny

The phrase **every nook and cranny** means 'every corner and small crack'.

understood

Here, **understood** is the past tense of the irregular verb **understand**.

more information: [understand](#)
