

## Cyclone Tracy, Darwin

### Events of December 1974

The northern Australian city of Darwin was devastated early on Christmas morning 1974 when hit by the tropical weather depression that was given the name Cyclone Tracy. As the eye of the cyclone passed over the city between midnight and 7am on Christmas morning, torrential rain fell and the winds were officially recorded at 217 kilometres per hour prior to the Bureau of Meteorology anemometer being destroyed. Houses and other buildings disintegrated under the onslaught, accompanied by the sounds of flying debris and breaking glass. Records have identified 66 names of individuals who perished as a result of the cyclone (53 on land and 13 at sea), and many more were injured. Seventy per cent of Darwin's homes were destroyed or suffered severe damage, and all public services – communications, power, water and sewerage – were severed.

### Rescue, recovery and reconstruction

Major-General Alan Stretton, Director-General of the Natural Disasters Organisation, was placed in charge of the rescue effort. Emergency committees were established to deal with such matters as accommodation, clean-up, clothing, communications, evacuation, food, law and order, sanitation and health and social welfare. The defence forces played a major role in cleaning up the city and suburbs.

With essential services all severed, and with food and shelter at a premium, many Darwin people were evacuated and in the week that followed Darwin's population was reduced to little more than 10,000. For the next six months access to the city was regulated by means of a permit system.

### Darwin Reconstruction Commission

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission (CA 2276) was established on 28 February 1975 by the *Darwin Reconstruction Act 1975* to plan, coordinate and undertake the rebuilding of Darwin. Between 1975 and 1978 the Commission coordinated many construction projects including the building or repair of more than 2500 homes.

## Records relating to Cyclone Tracy

Selected records relating to Cyclone Tracy held by the National Archives in Canberra, Sydney and Darwin are listed below.

The Darwin office holds a range of published sources about Cyclone Tracy, including the four annual reports of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission.

Searches on [RecordSearch](#), the National Archives collection database, using keywords such as 'cyclone tracy' and 'Darwin reconstruction' will identify records of interest.

Use our online image bank, [PhotoSearch](#), to identify images taken in Darwin in the days following the cyclone and during the clean-up and reconstruction phases.

## Canberra

### Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<a href="#">Correspondence files (search using keywords 'Darwin cyclone')</a>	1957–	A1209

### Australian Overseas Information Service

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<a href="#">Photographs of Indonesian planes unloading supplies at Darwin airport following Cyclone Tracy</a>	1975	A6180, 30/1/75/17
<a href="#">Photographs of Indonesian planes unloading supplies at Darwin airport following Cyclone Tracy</a>	1975	A6180, 30/1/75/18
<a href="#">Photographs of Indonesian planes unloading supplies at Darwin airport following Cyclone Tracy</a>	1975	A6180, 30/1/75/19
<a href="#">Photographs of Indonesian planes unloading supplies at Darwin airport following Cyclone Tracy</a>	1975	A6180, 30/1/75/

## Sydney

### Department of the Media

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<a href="#">Tape recordings of ABC news reports, emergency warnings and programs relating to Darwin cyclone disaster*</a>	1974–75	C3123
<a href="#">Australian Information Service press clippings relating to the Darwin cyclone disaster</a>	1974–75	SP1378/11
<a href="#">Tape recordings of ABC news reports, emergency warnings and programs relating to the Darwin cyclone disaster</a>	1974–75	SP1378/12
<a href="#">Photographs of Darwin cyclone disaster</a>	1974–75	SP1378/2
<a href="#">Department press releases relating to the Darwin cyclone disaster</a>	1974–75	SP1378/5

Bound volumes of edited transcripts of ABC radio reports relating to Darwin cyclone disaster*	1974–75	SP1378/7
<u>Films of the Darwin cyclone disaster</u>	1975	C1968
<u>Magazine and newspaper issues relating to the Darwin cyclone disaster</u>	1975	SP1378/4

## Darwin

### Bureau of Meteorology

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Case history material for tropical cyclones</u>	1956–	E490

### Department of the Northern Territory, Central Office

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence accumulated by Director, Emergency Services (Ray McHenry) during the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy</u>	1974–75	E1593
<u>Applications for travel warrant and re-entry permits after Cyclone Tracy</u>	1975	E1597
<u>Copies of minutes, agenda and submissions –Darwin Reconstruction Commission</u>	1975–77	NTAC1979/335
<u>Entry permits and Northern Territory News list</u>	1975–78	E1613

### Darwin Reconstruction Commission

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Darwin Reconstruction Commission lot data sheets</u>	1975–77	E526
<u>Index to lots not photographed</u>	1975–77	E608
<u>Index to photographs taken of lots in Darwin after Cyclone Tracy</u>	1975–77	E609
<u>Photographs of Darwin taken after Cyclone Tracy (negative film held as E607)</u>	1975–77	E610
<u>Post Cyclone Tracy building condition survey</u>	1975–76	E953
<u>Records relating to the rebuild of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy</u>	1975–77	E1614
<u>Minutes of meetings, agenda items, decisions and correspondence</u>	1975–77	NTAC1980/420

### Darwin Cyclone Tracy Relief Fund

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1975–76	E1604

## NT Administrator's Council

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Record of entry to / departure from Darwin and permits to enter or re-enter – powers of Director, Emergency Services</u>	1975	NTAC1980/73

## Department of Social Security

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Lists relating to Darwin evacuees post-Cyclone Tracy (Microfiche copy held as E1095)</u>	1975–77	E1487

## Australian Valuation Office

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Darwin post-Cyclone Tracy building condition survey</u>	1975–76	E953

\* Copies also held in the Darwin Office of the National Archives.

## Other records relating to cyclones

For further information on records relating to cyclones please see *Fact sheet 90 - Cyclones and the Northern Territory*.