40th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy: A community driven approach to commemoration

Community digital photo mosaic of Darwin city created as part of the Facing Tracy interactive media program

Government Communication Awards
Award Category: Best Communications/Engagement (City Council)
Executive Summary

Following extensive consultation, including workshops, social media engagement and meetings with community leaders, it became clear that a multi-faceted approach to the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy was needed.

Tangible, physical expressions of memorialisation, opportunities to explore the emotional dimensions through displays, story sharing and social interaction, and the often unspoken psychological impacts that remain with families and individuals that were well represented with community development initiatives.

Through collaboration with community stakeholders, Cyclone Tracy survivors, non-government organisations, peak bodies and the Northern Territory Government, a wide ranging program of events, activities and engagement opportunities was developed and coordinated by the City of Darwin.

An unprecedented level of participation resulted, whereby all members of the community had the opportunity to learn about, explore and experience the ways Cyclone Tracy affected both individuals and the community as a whole. The program afforded new perspectives on the impact the event had on the development of modern-day, resilient Darwin in the face of the ongoing threat of cyclones in our city.

National media coverage gave a younger generation an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the disaster, and the contribution such a disaster has on our national psyche. Through partnership with media, across both traditional and new media platforms, national coverage was widespread.

Darwin Lord Mayor with Cyclone Tracy survivors; Darwin’s youngsters get involved; All Faiths Service at Christ Church Cathedral, Darwin
Cyclone Tracy is one of the most significant natural disasters to affect Australia. More than 70% of homes in Darwin were destroyed or severely damaged and 87% of the community were left homeless. More than 35,000 people were evacuated from Darwin, and 66 lives were lost. That the cyclone struck on Christmas Eve added a layer of heightened emotional response. It is an event etched in the memories of many, both in Darwin and across Australia.

Through the City of Darwin’s early engagement with survivors, non-government organisations, community groups, peak bodies and the community at large, it was evident that the commemoration program needed to appropriately address the broad range of needs articulated through the engagement process.

The City of Darwin allocated a budget of $100,000 to appropriately commemorate the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, and input was sought from the community about the ways they would like to see the budget used to acknowledge and pay tribute to the many people whose lives were affected.

The 40th anniversary project was integrated with the City of Darwin’s ongoing program to ensure cyclone preparedness through aligning with the themes of a connected, resilient and strong community.
Objectives

Engagement objectives:

• To provide a range of engagement platforms to enable all members of the community to inform City of Darwin about how they would like to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy

• To engage and collaborate with other levels of government to ensure a whole of government approach to the commemorative program

• To work with community leaders, peak bodies and non-government organisations to effectively engage their members and community groups

Program objectives:

• To deliver an integrated program of events, activities and participation opportunities which holistically addressed the range of needs identified through the engagement process

• To ensure the younger generation become engaged with the significance of the event through story sharing to create understanding of community connection and resilience, as well as the importance of cyclone preparedness

• To drive the participation of Darwin’s cultural establishments in commemorating the 40th anniversary through meaningful programs

• To provide platforms enabling broad community participation through a wide variety of engagement opportunities

• To achieve full-house participation at all planned and programmed events and activities
Communication objectives:

- To ensure the community was aware of the ways they could participate in memorialising and reconciling the emotional trauma of the event
- To focus on the community resilience that resulted from the effects of Cyclone Tracy – our city is the greatest living monument of the devastation
- To demonstrate the ways that the City of Darwin’s program reflected the direct wishes of the community
- To encourage community participation in the program using all available communication channels
- To collaborate with media outlets to support community-wide involvement through story-telling and promotion of the program

Measures of success:

- Full capacity attendance at community events
- Grant funding applications to meet targets and deliver community benefits
- Participation of 1000+ people in the Facing Tracy interactive media program
- Bringing the Cyclone Tracy story to life for a new younger generation
- Positive feedback from Cyclone Tracy survivor groups
- Extensive social and traditional media collaboration, promotion and coverage
- Participation and story sharing across the community and stakeholders

A full house at the premiere of Blown Away, a new documentary broadcast nationally on the ABC on 22 Dec 2014; event ticket
The Solution

Community engagement

In February 2014 the City of Darwin hosted a stakeholder workshop to capture the aspirations of the community, government agencies, non government organisations and peak bodies. From the workshop it was clear that a single commemorative event would not meet the range of needs and expectations within the community and that a multi-level program of commemorations would be more appropriate.

The City of Darwin worked with community stakeholders to build a program of events, activities and opportunities for community participation.

The Cyclone Tracy Memorial Association was formed to bring together people who had experienced Cyclone Tracy, in particular younger people who had been children when Cyclone Tracy struck, to share stories and to assist in the healing process for some people. The group was an active and valuable forum and lobby presence and brought together people who reside locally and interstate to share in a discussion to identify ways in which to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, the range of personal experiences and its enduring impacts for some.

Social media presence was established entitled the “Cyclone Tracy 40th Anniversary Commissions and Memories” Facebook page and people continue to contribute to this shared page.

Development of multi-level program

The City of Darwin worked with the Northern Territory Government, partner organisations and the community to develop a range of activities and events that formed the commemorative program. This program included collaborative communications and engagement activities, and the inclusion of cultural organisations, such as the Northern Territory Library and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

The active engagement of stakeholders enabled a full range of events, activities and opportunities for participation to be developed, which addressed the wishes of the community as expressed through the engagement process.
1. Community Grants Program

In May 2014 Council resolved to provide a total of $40,000 for a special round of community grants to enable organisations to undertake projects that encourage participation at a local level in the commemoration, recognise the significant impact of Cyclone Tracy on the Darwin community and assist with the ongoing healing process for community members.

**Community Grants Program**

The City of Darwin allocated $40,000 to a special Cyclone Tracy 40th Anniversary Community Grants Program. The grant recipients have created a program including performances, exhibitions, workshops and art projects, enabling all members of the community to take part in the commemoration, in their chosen way.

**Friday 14 November 12.00pm**
Tales of Tracy: Cyclone Stories and Scrapbooking Workshop – COTA NT Contact 8941 1004 or email events@cotant.org.au

**21 November to 14 December**
1974 Remembering Tracy Exhibition at Tactile Arts, Conacher Street, Fannie Bay Contact 8981 6616 or admin@tactilearts.org.au

**1 to 9 December**
Darwin High School presents Reflections on a Shared Past Contact 8999 1222 or email darwin.high@ntschools.net

**10 December to 16 January 2015**
The Australian Red Cross Response to Cyclone Tracy Exhibition Contact 8924 3900 or ntinfo@redcross.org.au

**Sunday 21 December 7.00pm**
Kevin McCarthy presents The Turbulent Years at The Railway Club Contact 0411 135 418 or macc@blarneybulletin.com

**24 December to 23 January**
Images of Tracy by Bob Leduidge and Beat Erismann at the Qantas Hangar, Parap Visit four22images.com

Commemoration for Aboriginal survivors, families and their friends – Aboriginal Peak organisations of the NT Contact projectofficer. apont@amsant.org.au

Blow Me Down Video Clip by The Neo Contact jack@theneo.com

Original song Albion Park written by Jenni Boon Visit jenniboon.com

Community Deaf Awareness for Emergencies – Did you Hear the Cyclone Tracy? – Deaf NT Contact 8943 2016 or info@deafnt.org.au

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**Detail of Community Grants Program**

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Recipients of the Community Grants with the Lord Mayor Katrina Fong Lim at a special awards presentation
2. Facing Tracy Interactive Media Program

This socially interactive digital project provided the community with an opportunity to participate in a shared experience as part of the program.

Participants were asked to select a background image representing Darwin pre, during or after Cyclone Tracy, enabling them to place themselves in their chosen part of our community’s shared history.

A photo-booth style image was taken of the participant with their chosen background and was then uploaded onto the facingtracy.com website. An ever changing picture was built as more and more members of the community participated in this unique approach to creating community art.

The mobile Facing Tracy Booth toured many locations across Darwin, including Parliament House for the Chief Minister’s Official Reception event, Darwin’s main shopping mall at Casuarina square and all four of the City of Darwin libraries. More than 2000 members of the community had their chosen background and photo booth image captured as part of the unique community art project, with 1500 images used in the final artwork.
2. Facing Tracy cont’d

Postcard created to encourage participation in Facing Tracy: Be Part of the Bigger Picture

The final photo mosaic image, made up of images of more than 1500 people

Close up of a section of the final digital mosaic - members of the community with their selected background photos (provided by the Northern Territory Library)
TV ad produced as a result of collaboration with Southern Cross Media Darwin. This 30" TV ad was broadcast through December 2014 and January 2015. Note: a copy of this ad is included in the submission; if it cannot be viewed within this document, please refer to attachments in awards submission folder.

The Facing Tracy mobile booth, created by local Darwin company and toured around Darwin locations and events between November 2014 and January 2015.
3. Community Events Program

In addition to the community driven initiatives and the participatory Facing Tracy project, the City of Darwin planned a series of formal community events to appropriately commemorate the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy.

*All-Faith Commemorative Service at Christ Church Cathedral*

This service commemorated those who suffered and lost their lives and gave thanksgiving to those who returned or rebuilt Darwin. All denominations were represented and the program included a number of speakers, readings, prayers, poems and song. Keynote addresses were given by Dr Ella Stack, Mayor of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy and during the recovery program, Administrator of the Northern Territory the honourable John Hardy (living in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy struck) and Bishop Clyde Wood, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in 1974.

The event was broadcast nationally via [ABC radio (view here)](http://www.abc.net.au), who also created a media wall to record comments about Cyclone Tracy.
3. Community Events Program cont’d

Northern Territory Government Reception at Parliament House

The Chief Minister’s reception enabled an occasion for guests to reunite, share stories and experiences and reflect. City of Darwin collected audio recordings of attendees at the special event to capture stories for sharing through website.

Images taken at the NT Government’s reception; middle picture, Chief Minister Adam Giles, Ms May Aggebeo and Alderman Gary Haslett
3. Community Events Program cont’d

Lord Mayor’s Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at Raintree Park and The Mall
This annual event was imbued with special meaning this year. A distinctive star was unveiled and adorned the Lord Mayor’s Christmas Tree to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy. 5 December 2014

Lord Mayor’s Christmas Tree – Dimming the Lights Ceremony at Raintree Park
On Christmas Eve, a special ceremony was held around the Lord Mayor’s Christmas Tree to commemorate the night Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin. The program included speakers, readings and song before the Lord Mayor dimmed the lights and temporarily extinguished the star on the Christmas Tree. 24 December 2014

Unveiling of the Commemorative Plaque – Porch at Christ Church Cathedral
On Boxing Day the Lord Mayor, Church Leaders, the Administrator of the Northern Territory and special guests unveiled a commemorative plaque in the portico area of Christ Church Cathedral. The new plaque accompanied an earlier plaque the City of Darwin unveiled following the construction of the new Cathedral after Cyclone Tracy reduced most of the Cathedral to rubble. This also provided a place for members of the community to leave tributes. 26 December 2014

Left: Christmas Tree at Raintree Park. Council commissioned the production of special lighting at the base of the tree. Lit lines were created in the base surrounding the tree. The 66 lines represented the 66 lives lost as a result of Cyclone Tracy.

Left: Darwin Lord Mayor Katrina Fong Lim with Northern Territory Administrator John Hardy at the unveiling of the plaque event

Right: Darwin Lord Mayor with Cyclone Tracy survivors at the memorial plaque at the Civic Centre
3. Community Events Program

Tracy Village Community Commemorative Event - Tracy Village Social and Sports Club

This evening reunion event was an opportunity for those who travelled from interstate, to join with Darwin residents and share stories and bring along their memorabilia. Participants were also able to receive advice on caring for their memorabilia. 28 December 2014

Pictures taken at the Cyclone Tracy 40th Anniversary event at the Tracy Village Sports and Social Club
3. Community Events Program cont’d

**National Film Premiere – ABC’s Blown Away**

Brindle Films Pty Ltd and Nirvana Films were commissioned by ABC1 Television to develop a documentary *Blown Away* that explored the myths and revealed new perspectives of the Cyclone Tracy event.

The ABC agreed to allow the City of Darwin to host a special preview event for Darwin audiences at the Darwin Entertainment Centre. This exclusive event was held at the Darwin Entertainment Centre following the Lord Mayor’s Christmas Tree Lighting event and featured interviews with the a select panel including the Director, documentary participants and special guests. *5 December 2014*

The film was broadcast nationally on ABC TV on Boxing Day 2014.


A full house at the premiere of Blown Away, compered by Tom Pauling, previous Administrator of the Northern Territory who was in Darwin during Cyclone Tracy

**Collaborations with other organisations**

- Red Cross community exhibition at the Civic Centre
- COTA (Council of The Ageing) workshop
- Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory extension of existing exhibit
- White glove tour of NT Archives
Results

Integrated communications
An integrated communications plan was prepared to ensure delivery of the objectives of the 40th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy project.

Creation of a new logo and program collateral

Examples of advertising, materials and collateral
Integrated communications cont’d

Advertising and promotion
✓ Collaboration with Southern Cross to produce a TV ad at no cost, to run throughout December and January. The estimated audience delivery for the package was 30,000 people through the Darwin metropolitan region.
✓ Partnership with the NT Government to participate in an advertising package with the NT News, across the newspaper, a special 40 page lift out, the NT News website and social media wall. The estimated overall reach of the partnership was more than 25,000 people through Darwin
✓ Editorial support in monthly ‘what’s on' guide, Off the Leash to complement one page ad placement, circulation of 15,000 throughout the Darwin region

Website for story sharing
✓ Using Engagement HQ software, a site area was created to enable the community to share their stories, and find out about the suite of events and activities to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy.
✓ Between October 2014 and January 2015, the site attracted more than 7,000 unique visitors generating 55,000 page views. 500 registrations led to participation of 150 individuals in the survey, forms and story sharing. The link on the City of Darwin webpage and facebook links were the source of more than 40% of visitors to the interactive site.
Budget

A budget of $100,000 was allocated to fund all community events and activities, with a further $40,000 made available to support the special round of community grants. City of Darwin achieved the project goals, delivering all objectives whilst saving $11,000 of the original planned budget.

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<th>Website registrations</th>
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Community Grants:

All grants awarded were successfully acquitted. Below are links to the output of a number of the grants projects:

The Neo – Darwin based band created a video clip for the song Blown Away, inspired by Cyclone Tracy.

[Blown Away video clip]


[Albion Park music and video]

DeafNT Darwin – Education program to increase hearing awareness and communication with deaf people in emergencies.

[DeafNT video clip]

DeafNT Darwin kids sing ‘Santa Never Made it to Darwin’ at the City of Darwin community event on Christmas Eve.

[DeafNT kids sing on Christmas Eve]

The Red Cross – An acknowledgement of the tireless efforts of the Australian Red Cross volunteers during Cyclone Tracy and the recovery through a special exhibition at the Civic Centre.

[Red Cross promotional material]

Kevin McCarthy – Presents an anecdotal and musical journey which celebrates Darwin during the 1970s.

[Kevin McCarthy flyer]

Franck Gohier – Creation of mural at Tactile arts reflected his own Cyclone Tracy story – read about it here!

[Franck Gohier's Twisted story]
Measures of success

✓ Full capacity attendance at community events

Through a program of personal invitations, website registration, social media and advertising, full capacity was achieved at most community events. The challenges associated with the timing of events and activities included:

– Cyclone Tracy struck on Christmas Eve, and as a large number of Darwinians travel interstate during the Christmas period events needed to be spread over time to enable maximum participation

– However, many of the Cyclone Tracy survivors who had planned to travel from interstate to Darwin for the Christmas period expected to be able to attend key events over the time of their stay

The solution was to start the program of events and activities at the beginning of December to enable as many of the local community to participate, and also to ensure that there were events planned over Christmas for visitors to participate in.

✓ Grant funding applications to meet targets and deliver community benefits

A total of 11 community groups and individuals applied for community grants, all of which met the selection criteria for the special purpose grants. All grants acquittals have now been received, and all participants reported high levels of satisfaction with their event or activity.

The recipients of the grants were featured as key parts of the overall 40th anniversary program, and positive anecdotal feedback was received at each of the events, workshops, exhibitions or programs.

✓ Participation of 1000+ people in the Facing Tracy interactive media program

The innovative, custom made Facing Tracy interactive media program exceeded all expectations with double the anticipated number of people participating. Many stories were shared as the mobile booth toured Darwin, and captured images of 2,000 people with their chosen background picture.
Measures of success cont’d

✓ Bringing the Cyclone Tracy story to life for a new younger generation

Many of the survivors of Cyclone Tracy had been children at the time the cyclone struck. The 40th anniversary presented this generation of people who had experienced the horrors of the event to share their stories and reconcile the different emotions many of them had experienced.

Through the Facing Tracy project, many children and young people had the opportunity to connect with the significant event in Darwin’s history in a contemporary, technology let setting. Through choosing to place themselves at a different stage in Darwin’s history though the selection of their background photo, they were able to connect with the historic event in the context of the ongoing threat cyclones present in the tropical north of Australia.

Connecting with the younger audience also enabled City of Darwin to promote cyclone preparedness through community resilience and strength.

✓ Extensive social and traditional media collaboration, promotion and coverage

Through collaboration with media, assistance in sourcing talent and positive relationships, the local media response was huge. Please see end of this document for links to some of the extensive local and national media coverage achieved.

✓ Story sharing across the community and stakeholders

The 40th anniversary program was for many, the first time they had been able to actively participate in sharing their stories. Through workshops, networking opportunities, events and social media, the level of community participation was much higher than had been anticipated. One of the Aldermen of the City of Darwin Council who was living in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy struck was moved to tears as stories were shared at one of the community events, and there was a strong collective sense of relief for many at being able to unburden themselves from often painful memories.

For City of Darwin staff involved in bringing the program to life, it was also a roller-coaster of emotions and experiences, but what a worthwhile project to have been a part of!
Positve feedback from Cyclone Tracy survivor groups

Words of support, encouragement and thanks from participants in the program were overwhelmingly positive. This was a marked turnaround from earlier in 2014, where there had been some negative comment about the perceived nature of the planned events. It was through the City of Darwin communication and engagement process with the community that this perception was turned around.

Anecdotal Feedback from participants:

“I came away from Darwin with a sense of closure though I admit I will never forget that terrible night. It was lovely to meet the Lord Mayor Katrina was a lovely lady it was an honour to meet her and to be involved in the anniversary celebrations thank you!” Interstate visitor

Tracy Village, Cyclone Tracy function 28/12/14. “It was a great night and much appreciated” Interstate visitor

“THANKS Everyone for an AWESOME time in Darwin. I DIDN’T want to leave !!!” Member of the Cyclone Tracy 40th Anniversary Commemoration and Memorial Facebook page

“This year is unlike any other Tracy Anniversary not because it’s 40 years on, but because there are so many survivors that are reaching out to each other from afar and sharing their stories for the first time. It’s a healing process that is well overdue and needed to happen for us to recover. Thank you for sharing and may you all have a peaceful Christmas. Facebook page contributor

Facing Tracy was just awesome – from start to finish, I loved my involvement in the project. Thanks City of Darwin! Facing Tracy participant

“What a fantastic site, good on you all for sharing your stories, you are all part of Territory history!!” Facebook page contributor

“Perhaps this site and the 40th anniversary will release a lot of pent up emotions for people. I hope those people have the support they need. It’s been a long time overdue” Facebook page contributor

“Congratulations to the organisers of the Memorial service” via email
Media Coverage:
There was extensive local and national media coverage of the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, including a live national broadcast of the all-faiths service at Christ Church Cathedral. A selection of the media coverage can be viewed through the links provided:

ABC TV: National broadcast of shared stories:

ABC website:

ABC News Darwin

SBS World News:

Channel 7 Sunrise:

Channel 9 Darwin

ABC Darwin

Sydney Morning Herald:

The Age:

The Australian:

Bureau of Meteorology

Channel 9 Today show:

Channel 10 The Project
https://www.facebook.com/groups/608368562575761/?fref=ts