

PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCED DARWIN CYCLONE TRACY:

HUMAN RESPONSES

E.P. Milliken
Research Consultant, Darwin

Darwin's Population from 24th December 1974 and
Immediately Following

There is some inconsistency in published statements regarding Darwin's resident population as at December 1974 and the actual number of people physically in the city on the night of 24th December 1974 (Mitchell 1978 and 1981, Stretton 1975 and 1976, Darwin Reconstruction Commission undated). The following figures are a reasonable approximation of the population situation.

Regular residents 24.12.74		49,000
Absent on recreation leave. etc. 24.12.74		5,500
In Darwin night of 24.12.74		<u>43,500</u>
Evacuated by air	25,628	
Evacuated/Departed by road	<u>7,234</u>	32,862
In Darwin night of 31.12.74		<u>10,638</u>
In Darwin, 2nd January 1975		11,019

Comparison Groupings of Darwin People

Two groups of Darwin's residents (at 24th December 1974) experienced Cyclone Tracy in quite different ways. One group knew the fury of the storm and emerged from shelter on 25th December to see the devastation of their city and to guess at the extent of their own personal loss. The other group heard the story of the destruction of their city, hopefully yet fearfully guessed at the extent of their personal loss and (most of them) returned from peace, order and security to see the reality of the devastation and their loss. In this paper, for convenience, I shall describe these two groups: the former as INDARWINS(N=551), the latter as OUTDARWINS(N=101). The responses of people in each of these two groups to Tracy and to resettlement after Tracy, might be expected to be different.

Other groupings of Darwin's people used in response comparison pairings in a follow-up study carried out six years after Tracy struck (Milliken, 1983) were: by ownership of dwelling by extent of destruction of dwelling, by evacuation or not after the cyclone, by marital status, by having or not having dependents in Darwin, by residence still in Darwin or residence elsewhere.