



The Darwin suburb of Wagaman after Tracy's impact. (Bureau of Meteorology)

Another loss, which was strangely related to the Navy, was the Fairmile launch *Ataluma*, which was one of 35 such ex-RAN vessels from WWII. She had worked as a whale-chaser post-war, and was then repurposed as a survey ship, but had just been bought by Steve Pastrokos of the Aspa City Hotel. Torn from her moorings, she had been swept unmanned down the harbour to East Point where she was driven ashore. The wreck of this once proud wooden ship – likely Fairmile *ML 808* of the Navy – can be seen scattered in pieces near Dudley Point to this day.³

On land it was not immediately apparent the worst was over. At Navy base HMAS *Coonawarra* Yvonne Lowe remembers that morning:

... drying any bedding we could find and dragging any wayward roofing iron into the tennis courts to prevent it from doing further damage should another blow occur. There were strong rumours another blow was on the way.

The extent of the damage is best expressed in raw statistics:

- Darwin Naval Headquarters was destroyed, as was 80 per cent of the patrol boat base and 90 per cent of the naval married quarters.
- The oil fuel installation and the naval communications station HMAS *Coonawarra* were extensively damaged.

Further afield, the scale of the damage statistics shows that life would be almost impossible for many of the city's residents:

- Approximately 20,000 families had their houses impacted in a way that meant they were not able to be lived in. That meant that 90% of housing was unliveable. Grant Tambling,

³ The author wrote "What Fairmile is that?", an article which has been released in several publications, analysing which of the Fairmile fleet the *Ataluma* was. The nearest conclusion arrived at so far narrows it down to *ML 808* but the precise identity remains uncertain due to lack of records.