Ceremony marks night city’s lights went out

RAIN TREE Park lit up on Christmas Eve as survivors and the community drew in close to remember the night Darwin changed forever when Cyclone Tracy struck 40 years ago.

Plastic candlelights and fans were handed out by City of Darwin staff as the crowds sang along to Christmas carols, and children sang Darwin’s very own carol, Santa Never Made It Into Darwin.

Dimming the Lights was part of the City of Darwin’s series of commemorations that mark the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy and remembered those that perished during the storm.

For Helen Ogden, the ceremony was the first she had attended with her family.

“It’s lovely being together – it’s just symbolic,” she said.

Cyclone Tracy tore apart the Ogden household in 1974, but all of the family survived – “apart from a few scratches from the bougainvilleas,” Mrs Ogden’s son Rede said. He was just three years old at the time.

Mrs Ogden and husband Allan worked for the government and were forced to stay on in Darwin while the children lived in Hobart for a year.

The Ogdens lived on the floorboards of their Jingili home during the rebuild.

“We have been through a few cyclones since then,” Mrs Ogden said, “but Tracy was by far the worst because of the children.” Her daughter Louise still lives in Darwin.

City of Darwin CEO Brendan Dowd said the council was “absolutely delighted” with the commemoration ceremony.

YOU have probably never heard of Poppy Papazoglou but chances are you’ve seen her.

Poppy, now 43, was the three-year-old girl in this famous image taken on the devastated streets of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy hit.

She said she does not remember the photo being taken but remembers waiting the cyclone out with her family.

“We were in the middle room and the three of us kids were in the cot with mum and dad standing around it,” she said.

“I remember my sister crying because she wanted milk, she was only one at the time. “I recall the howling of the wind.”

The photo was taken on Christmas Day 1974, Poppy had gone with her mum to check on some neighbours in Moil.

“Mum said I just saw the tricycle there and jumped on it and started riding around.”

Poppy is now a mum to three grown-up children and stayed in the Territory until around 10 years ago when they moved to Adelaide.

She said her kids think it is pretty cool that she is the young girl in one of the most famous Tracy photos.

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Jaamie Papazoglou (inset) was the three-year-old riding a tricycle amid the devastation of Cyclone Tracy in Darwin on Christmas Day, 1974