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Ngunnawal language to greet visitors to Canberra Airport

Visitors arriving at the International terminal of Canberra Airport will be greeted by a Welcome to Country in Ngunnawal, the traditional Aboriginal language of the ACT region.

The Welcome to Country recorded by Ngunnawal Traditional Owners also features an introduction and translation in English.

For Ngunnawal Traditional Owner, Caroline Hughes, the Canberra Airport initiative is an important recognition of Ngunnawal culture, reconciliation and a source of personal pride.

“Our language is the key to all our relationships and how we interact with each other. It is the salient ingredient to spirituality, lore, law and retaining our cultural identity and connection. However, growing up we could never share our language with non-Indigenous people. Language was to be kept secret to keep us safe. They took children away if you spoke language,” Ms Hughes said.

“Today, I am proud to share our language, welcoming visitors from around Australia and the world, who come to our traditional Country and to continue their journey safely.”

AIATSIS CEO, and Co-Chair of the UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages Steering Committee, Craig Ritchie, said the Ngunnawal airport greeting is a great milestone in the revitalisation of the Ngunnawal language and a timely celebration in the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL).

“The Ngunnawal community have been working tirelessly to revitalise and share their language and AIATSIS is proud to help with this through the Ngunnawal Language Project. We are delighted that visitors to Canberra Airport will now be greeted in Ngunnawal, particularly in 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages.”

Stephen Byron, CEO of Canberra Airport, hopes that the Welcome to Country will connect visitors with the long, continuing Aboriginal history of the ACT region and enrich their stay.

“As more visitors travel to the ACT region, we want them to appreciate the full history of the land on which they have arrived. Being welcomed to Canberra in Ngunnawal, by Traditional Owners, is an important and memorable first step for visitors arriving in Canberra and sets the foundation for a more enriching visit,” Mr Byron said.

The Ngunnawal Welcome to Country message at Canberra Airport was officially launched at a ceremony on the 9th of July.

Media enquiries: Commsmedia@aiatsis.gov.au or P: 02 6261 4253