



# Media Release

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## Children Are Ngunawal Language Group's First Priority

**Children in the ACT and surrounding region will soon be able to learn one of the traditional Aboriginal languages spoken in the Canberra region.**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and Ngaiyurriija Ngunawal Language Group are pleased to announce the signing of a cooperative research agreement to revitalise the Ngunawal language of the ACT and South East NSW.

The Ngaiyurriija Ngunawal Language Group, comprised of a number of Ngunawal family groups – Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation, Koomurri Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation and Ngunawal Heritage Aboriginal Corporation – are working with AIATSIS to develop a language program for primary school children.

The Ngaiyurriija Ngunawal Language Group's aim is to provide a fully functional language that could also be part of the ACT school curriculum.

The program will include an acknowledgement of country in the Ngunawal language, children's stories, and games to educate the children through integral play.

AIATSIS Principal, Russell Taylor said it is a core part of our programs to support communities as they strengthen their connection to culture and their desire to teach their young and to share with others.

"AIATSIS holds significant collections of language records from all around Australia, and has linguists on staff to assist communities who want to revitalise their traditional languages," Mr Taylor said.

Ngunawal traditional custodian, Tyrone Bell said language is vital to our identity.

"You can have the stories and knowledge passed down from the elders but without language your whole cultural identity is incomplete," Mr Bell said.

Ngunawal traditional custodian, Dean Delponte said learning the revitalised Ngunawal language will offer a wonderful enriched opportunity for the Ngunawal and wider communities to have a greater understanding and appreciation of Ngunawal country and all it has to offer.

"We are excited to be working with AIATSIS to revive and learn our traditional language as well as teach it to others to ensure its survival," Mr Delponte said.

Koomurri Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation take the view that to "plant a seed before you leave ensures that those following behind will always have sustenance for their future times. For the



Corporation, language represents the many seeds that have been planted before, as each generation nurtures and contributes to its meaning and substance.”

Interest has already been overwhelming from the general public, schools, non- government and government organisations, to advise on projects wishing to include local Aboriginal Ngunawal language.

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