

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 16 December, 2022

Vickers Vimy final journey complete as new exhibition opens to the public

Adelaide Airport travellers and visitors will get their first look at the new Vickers Vimy exhibition space when it opens to the public from 8am on Monday morning, December 19.

Project supporters, stakeholders and descendants of the original flight crew were given a preview of the exhibition space this morning (Friday 16 December) as part of opening celebrations.

The more than 100-year-old Vickers Vimy was the first aircraft to fly from England to Australia in 1919. Earlier this year it was relocated from its old hangar near the airport's long term car park to a new purpose-built exhibition space within the recently expanded domestic and international terminal.

The exhibition, which has been carefully constructed around the Vickers Vimy, features interactive displays with multiple interactive touch screens, projection canvas, audio-visual presentations and artefacts from the original journey.

Visitors will be able to see inside the cockpit via giant mirrors hanging from the ceiling, and a mezzanine level will allow views from above the aircraft for the first time.

A dedicated website - www.adelaideairport.com.au/vickers-vimy/ - has been launched by Adelaide Airport with an educational section curated by the History Trust of SA for teachers and students. School groups can book a volunteer guide from the South Australian Aviation Museum.

The Vickers Vimy exhibition space will be open to the public 8am to 8pm, 365 days a year.

The \$7 million project has been jointly funded by the Federal Government, South Australian Government and Adelaide Airport.

Moving the aircraft in May required it to be carefully separated into three main pieces in preparation - the two outer wings, and the fuselage and engines with the stub wings. Each segment was carefully wrapped and scaffolding built around it to carry the weight and protect the structure during the move, which took 4½ hours to travel 2.1km to its new home.

Comments attributable to Adelaide Airport Managing Director, Brenton Cox:

The Vickers Vimy is a treasured national asset and Adelaide Airport is proud to be its custodian.

We're delighted that we can now share this incredibly important piece of aviation history in a more prominent location, easily accessed for the main international and domestic terminal.

Visitors will be able to see parts of the Vickers Vimy they've never seen before, with the wonderful mezzanine viewing platform and ceiling mirrors allowing you to see right inside the cockpit.

This relocation project has been a labour of love for so many people. It's wonderful that it's now accessible to anyone who visits Adelaide Airport.

Comments attributable to SA Premier Peter Malinauskas

The Vickers Vimy is a crucial part of the story of Australia.

This move will ensure that more South Australians, and visitors to our state, understand the international significance of the epic journey undertaken by the Smith brothers.

The new exhibition will be a must see for passengers transiting through Adelaide Airport on their way interstate or overseas.

Comments attributable to Federal Health Minister and Member for Hindmarsh, Mark Butler

During World War I, Semaphore locals, Ross and Keith Smith, made history in 1919 as the first aviators to fly from England to Australia in their famous Vickers Vimy aircraft.

This huge feat was achieved amidst the grief and upheaval associated with World War I, and delivered the community joy and pride.

I'm proud our Government has conserved one of South Australia's icons and now it will be seen by millions of tourists and South Australians, ensuring the story of the Vickers Vimy will be passed on for generations to come.

Background

The relocation was undertaken by South Australia's Artlab Australia, a recognised leader in the conservation of cultural collections to undertake the extremely delicate operation of deconstructing, relocating and piecing back together.

Author and aviation history specialist, David Crotty, was exhibition curator, while leading South Australian architecture firm Baukultur, exhibition design specialists Arketype and creative design studio Sandpit have designed the new exhibition space for the Vickers Vimy.

Besix Watpac undertook the construction works required for the relocation and exhibition space, following its successful completion of Adelaide Airport's terminal expansion project.

History

The Vickers Vimy – a biplane made of wood lined with fabric with open cockpits - was the first aircraft to complete the epic journey between Hounslow in England and Darwin in Australia as an entrant in the 1919 Air Race.

Flown by South Australian brothers Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith along with mechanics Wally Shiers and James Bennett, the 18,000km pioneering flight took 28 days to complete with no more than a compass and maps for navigation.

Additional footage

Archival footage of the Vickers Vimy is available here:

<https://we.tl/t-UqVVUCv7oX>

The following link provides vision of the Vickers Vimy relocation:

<https://we.tl/t-yB0gk1WKoc>

The following link provides images of the new exhibition space:

<https://we.tl/t-KltoBKuta0>

Vickers Vimy stats

Wingspan:	20.7m
Length:	13.1m
Height:	4.5m
Weight:	3.2 tonnes
Engine weight:	409kg each
Wings:	½ tonne each