



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

19 MARCH 2026

Sensory Tourism Australia Takes Accessible Tourism to the Next Level

Sensory Tourism Australia is calling on regional tourism organisations and local governments to take accessible tourism to the next level — transforming recent investments in infrastructure, training, and consultation into seamless, real-world visitor experiences.

With strong momentum across Australia’s visitor economy, many destinations have invested significantly in accessibility. In partnership with not-for-profit operator Cocky Guides, Sensory Tourism Australia is now focused on ensuring these investments translate into meaningful, high-quality experiences for travellers with lived experience.

Heading into Tourism Australia’s largest annual trade event, the Australian Tourism Exchange in Adelaide this May, Sensory Tourism Australia will reaffirm its partnership with Cocky Guides through immersive familiarisation (famil) programs. These bring groups of blind and low-vision travellers into regions to test, refine, and showcase accessible tourism offerings, while inviting destinations and operators to connect and learn more.

Sensory Tourism Australia Director and co-founder Kellie Hayes said the industry is ready for the next step.

“There has been significant investment in accessible tourism across infrastructure, training, and industry development,” Hayes said.

“Now it’s about ensuring destinations see a return on that investment — by welcoming travellers with lived experience to genuinely enjoy those improvements.

Our role is to help bring that investment to life, so it translates into real bookings, stronger experiences, and long-term value for the visitor economy.”

Cocky Guides founder James (Buck) McFarlane said small refinements can make a big impact.

“A lot of the investment has already been made,” McFarlane said.

“What we want to see now is that investment come to life — with travellers with lived experience not just accessing experiences, but truly enjoying them.

That’s where the real return on investment happens.”



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The famil model was piloted with Destination Port Stephens and has since expanded to include collaborations with Tourism North East, Tweed Tourism Co, and Reflections Holidays.

Sensory Tourism Australia is now inviting expressions of interest from regions and operators looking to elevate their accessible tourism offering in the 2025/2026 financial year.

“This is about moving beyond accessibility as a concept,” Hayes said.

“It’s about delivering service excellence — where every traveller feels included, capable, and genuinely welcomed.”

Tourism operators and destination representatives attending the Australian Tourism Exchange are encouraged to connect with Cocky Guides to explore partnership opportunities and learn how to maximise the return on their accessibility investments.

For more information, contact kellie@sensorytourism.com or connect with Cocky Guides at the Australian Tourism Exchange.

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CONTACT

For further information, please get in touch with Kellie Hayes via email at kellie@sensorytourism.com or call 0411 850 095

ABOUT SENSORY TOURISM

Sensory tourism is an emerging concept that presents destinations differently, with less emphasis on traditional sightseeing. A destination's physical and multi-sensory aspects are the priority in enhancing the tourism experience for blind and low-vision travellers with their other senses - hearing, taste, smell, and touch.

ABOUT SENSORY TOURISM AUSTRALIA

Sensory Tourism Australia is a leader in curating engaging itineraries for blind and low-vision travellers. These itineraries showcase multi-sensory aspects of Australia’s key destinations by engaging experienced local tourism businesses.

Sensory Tourism Australia is available to consult with travellers, travel agents and businesses to create supported travel itineraries to meet the needs of blind and low-vision travellers.

For more information, visit <https://sensorytourismaustralia.com/>



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ABOUT COCKY GUIDES

Since launching on 15 August 2018, Cocky Guides has specialised in providing unique, multisensory adventures for the blind and low-vision community. More than 1,500 Australians have visited 70 destinations with Cocky Guides.

Cocky Guides purpose is to inspire blind and low-vision Australians to access new destinations and experiences, and they were the recipient of the Gold Award for Excellence in Accessible Tourism at the prestigious 2023 NSW Tourism Awards and a finalist in the 2023 Australian Tourism Awards.

There are over 575,000 Australians who are blind or have low vision. Cocky Guides aims to be the leading support provider for adventure and travel, designed to increase independence, plus social and community participation for blind and low-vision Australians.

For more information, visit www.cockyguides.com.au