



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Cocky Guides Launches The Value Exchange at ATE26 to Connect Operators with Blind and Low Vision Travellers and Unlock New Markets

Cocky Guides Australia today launched The Value Exchange at the 2026 Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE26) in Adelaide — a practical, experience-based initiative that connects tourism operators directly with blind and low vision travellers to help them better understand, refine, and promote their products to a growing and underserved visitor market.

The initiative is designed to complement the important work already being done by accessibility consultants, trainers, and auditors across the industry. Where structured training and auditing provide the foundations, The Value Exchange offers operators a hands-on next step: the opportunity to experience their product alongside travellers with lived blind and low vision experience and receive frank, practical feedback.

Mr McFarlane said the program is as much about commercial opportunity as it is about inclusion, pointing to a domestic market of more than 575,000 Australians who are blind or have low vision.

“There is already excellent work happening in the accessibility training and consulting space, and we’re not here to replace any of it.”

“The Value Exchange sits alongside that work as a practical starting point or a natural extension — a way for operators to move from learning about accessibility to actually experiencing what it means for their product, with real travellers in real time.”

Through The Value Exchange, participating operators and destinations receive:

- Cocky Guides supported visits with blind and low vision travellers who review and provide practical feedback on products and services
- Lived-experience insight that helps businesses identify low-cost, high-impact improvements that benefit a much broader range of visitors
- Opportunities to promote their refined experiences to a network of travellers actively seeking inclusive options
- Access to Cocky Guides’ growing collection of bookable, inclusive tourism products — tried, tested, and ready to confidently serve blind and low vision travellers

In return, operators provide hosted famils or discounted experiences that Cocky Guides uses to deliver meaningful travel opportunities for blind and low vision Australians — many of whom face significant barriers to travel and social participation.

“A hosted experience with a Cocky Guides traveller and our trip leaders gives an operator something that is very hard to get any other way,” Mr McFarlane said. “It’s genuine, in-the-moment insight from someone experiencing your product through a very different lens.”

“The value flows both ways. The operator gains insight and confidence. Our travellers get extraordinary experiences. And the broader visitor economy becomes more welcoming for everyone.”



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Mr McFarlane said the benefits of The Value Exchange extend well beyond the blind and low vision community, with improvements that directly serve the rapidly growing older traveller market.

“When you make an experience work well for a blind and low vision traveller — clearer signage, better lighting, more considered staff communication, less reliance on small print — you are also making it work better for an older traveller.”

“The over-60s are one of the most significant and fastest-growing visitor cohorts in the country. They have time, they have spending power, and they are looking for experiences that feel genuinely welcoming and well-considered,” he said. “The improvements operators make through The Value Exchange position them beautifully for that market.”

At ATE26, Cocky Guides is seeking to connect with:

- Tourism operators and suppliers interested in joining The Value Exchange as a practical, experience-based step in their accessibility journey
- Destinations wanting to strengthen their appeal to blind, low vision and older travellers
- Visitor economy businesses looking to complement existing accessibility training with real-world, lived-experience testing

Mr McFarlane said the “progress over perfection” philosophy at the heart of Cocky Guides’ approach means operators do not need to have everything figured out before they participate.

“Whether an operator is just starting to think about accessibility or has already done significant work, The Value Exchange has something to offer,” he said. “It’s about taking the next step, whatever that step looks like for you.”

“One of the most valuable things a business can do is experience their product alongside travellers with lived experience. That’s what The Value Exchange makes possible.”

CONTACT

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ABOUT COCKY GUIDES

Cocky Guides Australia is a not-for-profit social enterprise creating multisensory group adventures and inclusive tourism experiences for blind and low-vision travellers.

Since 2018, Cocky Guides has delivered experiences across more than 70 Australian destinations, combining travel, community connection, confidence building, and accessibility advocacy through lived experience.

The organisation also works with tourism operators, destinations, and visitor economy stakeholders to improve inclusive tourism awareness and accessibility outcomes across Australia.

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