

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release



9 November 2023

### **Cocky Guides Wins Excellence in Accessible Tourism at the 2023 New South Wales Tourism Awards.**

Five years ago, Cocky Guides Leader and Founder James (Buck) McFarlane tested an idea he had to develop a new way of travel he calls sensory tourism. Sensory tourism seeks to present destinations differently, without sight, for blind and low-vision travellers. Today Cocky Guides is an award-winning not-for-profit, accessible tourism business for blind and low-vision Australians.

Cocky Guides is a social enterprise that connects communities and industry by providing group support to help blind and low-vision Australians travel without relying on family, friends or paid carers. Since its launch in 2018, Cocky Guides has returned over one million dollars to the Australian visitor economy.

Five key statistics that highlight Cocky Guides contribution to Australia's visitor economy over the past five years include:

1. Engaging 1,250 blind and low-vision travellers on around 300 sensory tours
2. Visited 60 destinations across Australia
3. Contributed over \$1,000,000 to Australia's visitor economy
4. Provided approximately 125,000 NDIS participant support hours in a social setting
5. Worked with over 100 Australian visitor economy businesses

Cocky Guides Founder James (Buck) McFarlane says, "What makes Cocky Guides extra special, apart from the multi-sensory experiences we create for our travellers, is the power of our advocacy for accessible and inclusive travel. We advocate by being out and about in destinations and working with a wide range of visitor economy businesses throughout NSW and beyond. Our amazing team of passionate Trip Leaders create inclusive experiences as diverse as hiking to the summit of Mount Koziusko to exploring underground in the opal mines of Lightning Ridge. "

In 2024 Cocky Guides has its sights set on supporting Destination NSW and Tourism Australia by offering bespoke packages for blind and low-vision International Visitors to Australia.

Do you have a friend or relative who is blind or has low vision? Share Cocky Guides on socials to discover what we do. Keep up to date with regular newsletters about group tours, or request a tailored trip at [www.cockyguides.com.au](http://www.cockyguides.com.au)

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### CONTACT

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### ABOUT COCKY GUIDES

Since launching in August 2018, Cocky Guides have specialised in providing unique, multisensory adventures for the blind and low-vision community. More than 1,250 travellers have visited 60 destinations with Cocky Guides.

Cocky Guides is a licensed Parks Eco Pass operator with NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and is the recipient of the Gold Award for Excellence in Accessible Tourism at the prestigious 2023 NSW 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](http://www.cockyguides.com.au)