

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



15 OCTOBER 2025

Coalcliff Surf Life Saving Club Expands Award-Winning “Dreams Take Flight” Program to Welcome Blind and Low-Vision Participants

To celebrate International White Cane Day, Coalcliff Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) is inviting expressions of interest from blind and low-vision Australians across the Illawarra, Southern Sydney, and South West Sydney regions who would like to play a vital role in keeping local beaches safe this summer—as Volunteer Radio Operators.

This new inclusive initiative will extend Coalcliff’s award-winning Dreams Take Flight Community Program, enabling people who are blind or have low vision to support patrol operations from the safety of the shore. Volunteer Radio Operators are central to beach safety, managing communications, logging activity, and coordinating responses between patrol teams and emergency services.

The Dreams Take Flight Program was founded in the 2020/21 season by Club Captain Rob Deacon, then a PDHPE teacher at Lawrence Hargrave School in Warwick Farm. Originally designed to empower disadvantaged youth through surf lifesaving, the program provided a pathway for young people facing emotional, learning, or family challenges to build life skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, resilience, and self-discipline.

Over the past five years, the program has expanded to include multiple schools across South West Sydney, equipping students with surf safety awareness and the opportunity to become active patrolling members of Coalcliff SLSC—benefiting both participants and the wider community.

For the 2025/26 patrol season, Coalcliff SLSC will adapt the program to include blind and low-vision Australians, offering them a pathway to connect with surf lifesaving and their local beach communities.

“Many people believe you need to be a strong swimmer or board rider to join a surf club,” says **Coalcliff SLSC President James McFarlane**. “But a radio operator is at the heart of every patrol—coordinating rescues, managing communication, and ensuring our beaches remain safe.

When I’m not on patrol, I lead a not-for-profit supporting blind and low-vision Australians to access Australia’s visitor economy. With the right training and a few small adjustments, there’s no reason our surf club can’t be even more inclusive. Our *Dreams Take Flight* program is flexible and adaptable to make that happen.”

The program for blind and low-vision participants includes:

1. Online Theory Component – completed at home or during group sessions.
2. Two Practical Workshops – 90-minute sessions at Coalcliff SLSC to apply radio operation skills.
3. Skills Assessment – demonstrating competency to achieve the Surf Life Saving Radio Operators Certificate.

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



This initiative is proudly supported by Cocky Guides, a not-for-profit leader in delivering group adventures and experiences for blind and low-vision Australians. Cocky Guides will help coordinate transport assistance and fund up to ten surf club memberships for participants who join the program.

Are you blind or low-vision—or know someone who is—who wants to contribute to beach safety while staying dry?

Expressions of interest are now open for the December 2025 intake of the Dreams Take Flight Volunteer Radio Operator Program.

To register, email James McFarlane at president@coalcliffslsc.com.au with your name and contact number.

END

ABOUT US

Coalcliff Surf Life Saving Club is the second most northerly surf club in the Illawarra and is known as the “Social Club.” Its volunteers patrol the “Place in the Sun” throughout summer, supporting a vibrant Nippers program, Ocean Swim Club, and community events year-round—including live music at The Bombie at Coledale RSL.

Learn more at www.coalcliffslsc.com.au

MEDIA CONTACT

James McFarlane

President, Coalcliff Surf Life Saving Club

📞 0403 827 666

✉ president@coalcliffslsc.com.au