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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**INAUGURAL NATIONAL TOURISM AWARD SHINES LIGHT ON ACCESSIBLE TOURISM**

The national finalists for the inaugural Excellence in Accessible Tourism award have been announced ahead of the prestigious 2023 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards taking place in Darwin, Northern Territory on Friday 15 March 2024.

As the newest of 26 national awards categories, the Excellence in Accessible Tourism award recognises a business that provides a tourism product, experience or service that goes above and beyond to accommodate and cater for people with accessibility needs.

Cocky Guides (NSW), Katherine Outback Experience (NT), Big4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort (QLD), Adelaide Fringe (SA), Accessible Accommodation (VIC) and Off the Beaten Track WA (WA) are the six national finalists vying for the coveted national Gold award.

"This new award category highlights the importance and value of accessible tourism to visitors and tourism businesses alike," said Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC) Chief Executive Officer Erin McLeod.

"ATIC is proud to support Australian tourism businesses to implement more inclusive business practices and make adjustments to accommodate visitors with accessibility requirements, just as our six national finalists have demonstrated so well," Ms McLeod said.

ATIC's Accessible Tourism program assists tourism businesses to understand and implement accessible tourism practices. The Accessible Tourism program is part of a suite of ATIC programs supported by the Australian Government to assist small, medium, and regional tourism businesses to enhance their quality, accessibility, and sustainability.

"With the support of the Australian Government and our recently established national partnership with Spinal Life Australia, we will continue to advocate for improvements in accessible tourism within Australia to see better inclusion for all visitors, both domestic and international," Ms McLeod said.

Spinal Life Australia, a sponsor of the upcoming 2023 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, hopes that the new accessible tourism award will inspire more of the nation's tourism industry to continue making meaningful changes to welcome more visitors with accessibility needs.

"We are thrilled to see tourism businesses recognised for demonstrating Excellence in Accessible Tourism, and look forward to seeing more inclusive tourism products, experiences and services become available across Australia in time for next year's Awards," Spinal Life Australia CEO Mark Townsend said.

“The accessible tourism market is continuing to grow, so now is the time for tourism businesses to make changes to improve their access and inclusion to reach more potential customers.”

The 2023 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards ceremony will take place on Friday 15 March 2024 in Darwin, Northern Territory. For information about the awards, go to <https://aapevents.eventsair.com/2023-australian-tourism-awards/>

## **State/Territory Tourism Awards – Excellence in Accessible Tourism Winners**

### **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Adelaide Fringe – GOLD

Monarto Safari Park – SILVER

BIG4 Renmark Riverfront Holiday Park – BRONZE

### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

Cocky Guides – GOLD

### **NORTHERN TERRITORY**

Katherine Outback Experience – GOLD

### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Off the Beaten Track WA – GOLD

Busselton Jetty – SILVER

RAC Arena – BRONZE

### **QUEENSLAND**

BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort – GOLD

Hopo Gold Coast Ferry – SILVER

Aquascene Magnetic Island - BRONZE

### **VICTORIA**

Accessible Accommodation - GOLD

**2023 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards - Excellence in Accessible Tourism Award Finalists**

NSW – Cocky Guides

NT – Katherine Outback Experience

QLD – BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort

SA – Adelaide Fringe

VIC – Accessible Accommodation

WA – Off the Beaten Track WA

**- Ends -**

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