



MEDIA RELEASE

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Adelaide Airport and Virgin Australia trial first 'Try Before You Fly' for people with disabilities and other health needs

Adelaide Airport has partnered with Virgin Australia in a new pilot initiative 'Try Before You Fly' in support of people with a disability and other health conditions who would otherwise perceive flying as a barrier to travel.

In what is believed to be the first such airport/airline initiative in Australia, more than 30 passengers plus their family members, companions and support workers were provided with an opportunity this week to go through the entire airport and boarding process from arriving at the airport to being seated on an aircraft ready for take-off.

Adelaide Airport Executive General Manager People, Culture and Customer, Dermot O'Neill, said travelling by plane was an exciting time but could also be intimidating, especially if customers had a disability or other health needs.

"This program has been designed to give individuals with disabilities and conditions that impact travel such as anxiety and autism an opportunity to go through the entire process as a test run - from arriving at the airport, checking in, passing through security and then boarding the plane and buckling up their seatbelt ready for take-off," Mr O'Neill said.

"We wanted to give these customers a chance to be familiar with what will happen before they fly for real, to help take away some of the anxiety of the unknown. It's about helping them become familiar with the airport environment and processes and ensure a more comfortable and confident travel experience. Many of the customers who took part are already booked to fly in the coming weeks and months.

"We hope this initiative could be an ongoing program depending on feedback from the initial trial."

Velocity Frequent Flyer Chief Executive Officer and Co-Chair of the Belonging Strategy for the Virgin Australia Group, Nick Rohrlach, said Virgin Australia wants all passengers to have a wonderful experience flying with the airline and the program is a great way to assist individuals with disabilities to become more comfortable with the airport setting and processes.

"At Virgin Australia, we always aim to make the travel experience wonderful for every guest including those with disabilities and health conditions. This exciting initiative aims to open a world of possibilities for these people who would ordinarily feel uncomfortable travelling."

"We are honoured to work with Adelaide Airport on what we believe is an Australian-first program and hope it can continue in an ongoing nature as part of our commitment to make travel a safe, convenient and enjoyable journey for all guests."

Adelaide Airport provides a range of accessibility services including airside and landside assistance animal relief areas; Changing Places facilities offering more space, a ceiling hoist and adult size change table; a volunteer ambassador program; a meet and assist program at the accessible drop off and pick up zone; hearing loops installed throughout the terminal; and a dedicated security assistance lane.

Adelaide Airport's facility dog, Elmo - who has been trained by Guide Dogs SA/NT - spends his working hours as a reassuring presence for people with hidden disabilities who may need some support that isn't immediately apparent. The airport also has in place a sunflower card and lanyard-based system, which offers customers a discreet way to indicate to Airport staff that extra assistance is required.

Virgin Australia's ongoing ability focus

Virgin Australia continues to offer a range of support for people with specific needs. This includes but is not limited to travelling with assistance dogs, vision and hearing impairments and mobility assistance. The airline's current initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Customer service team members undertaking extensive training to support their understanding of guest accessibility.
- Braille and large print safety instruction manuals onboard all aircraft.
- A voluntary employee network who drives initiatives to improve customer and employee accessibility.
- Ongoing collaboration with disability advocacy organisations and airports to ensure processes are inclusive of those with specific needs and accessibility solutions are considered during airport redevelopments.

[Further information on accessibility at Virgin Australia.](#)