



MEDIA RELEASE

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA AND ADELAIDE AIRPORT LAUNCH AUSTRALIAN FIRST ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAM

Saturday, 31 May 2025: Virgin Australia and Adelaide Airport have today announced the official launch of the 'Try Before You Fly' (TBYF) program, committing long-term to an initiative that provides people with disability and other health conditions the opportunity to experience flying who would otherwise consider it as a barrier.

TBYF is the first program of its kind in Australia, offering participants a full simulated travel experience - from booking and check-in to boarding and sitting on an aircraft - without the plane ever leaving the gate. The initiative is designed to reduce anxiety and build confidence for individuals who may find flying challenging, including those with disabilities or sensory sensitivities.

Following a series of successful trials, the program will today welcome 35 new participants and its 200th guest in total since the trials commenced, marking a significant step forward in making air travel more inclusive and accessible for all Australians.

Comments from Virgin Australia Chief Risk Officer Stuart Aggs:

"At Virgin Australia we want flying to be a wonderful experience for all and champion programs like Try Before You Fly as they provide both a meaningful and practical way to remove barriers, foster inclusion and open up a world of possibilities to those who would otherwise avoid flying," Mr Aggs said.

"We are incredibly proud to formally launch the program with Adelaide Airport today, with support from the South Australian Government, Velocity Frequent Flyer, What Ability and other community organisations who have helped us bring this to life.

"We focus on celebrating every milestone - whether it's checking in, boarding, or sitting on the aircraft, as every participant has different goals of what success looks like for them. For many participants, simply arriving at the airport is a major achievement so it's important to recognise and celebrate the unique experiences of all those who participate."

"Of the previous round participants, 47 per cent have since chosen to travel by air, so we know the transformative power that programs like this can have in fostering inclusion and look forward to exploring new ways to remove barriers to flying.

Comments from Adelaide Airport Executive General Manager People, Culture and Customer, Dermot O'Neill:

"Travelling by plane is an exciting time but it can also be intimidating, especially for customers living with a disability or other health considerations.

"Following a successful trial with Virgin Australia, we are delighted the Try Before You Fly program will become an ongoing initiative to support our customers and help make air travel more accessible to more people.

"This program gives individuals with disabilities and conditions that impact their ability to travel an opportunity to go through the entire process as a test run and become familiar with what will happen before they fly, to help take away some of the anxiety of the unknown.

"We are committed to providing an inclusive and accessible environment for all travellers. This program will run alongside other accessible travel initiatives at Adelaide Airport including our meet and assist program, hearing loops installed throughout the terminal and Facility Dog, Elmo - trained by Guide Dogs SA/NT - who spends his working hours as a reassuring presence for people with hidden disabilities who may need some support when it isn't immediately apparent."



Comments from Minister for Trade and Tourism, Don Farrell:

"The Try Before You Fly program is a fantastic initiative that breaks down barriers and opens the skies for more Australians. Whether someone is flying for the first time, lives with a disability, or would benefit from the experience of navigating airports, this program offers support in a practical and compassionate way."

"By making this program permanent, Virgin Australia and Adelaide Airport are setting a new standard in inclusive travel – one that's good for individuals, good for tourism, and good for Australia."

"Tourism is not just about destinations – it's about people. This program supports accessible tourism by ensuring that more Australians, regardless of their circumstances, can experience the joy of travel. It helps make sure that no one is left behind."

Comments from South Australian Minister for Autism Emily Bourke, MLC:

"South Australia leads the way as the Autism Inclusive State and we are proud to support programs that break down barriers and make a difference to individuals' lives."

"Improved accessibility in a welcoming environment – supported by dedicated staff and volunteers – will help passengers feel more confident and opens up travel opportunities for participants."

"Our Government is determined to build knowledge in autism and inclusive practices for organisations, and this initiative sets out to create a more inclusive world for all South Australians."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

- The program will host 35 participants, supported by Virgin Australia team members from across the country and trained volunteers from Adelaide Airport. All staff and volunteers have undergone access and inclusion training provided by What Ability, including practical scenario-based exercises.
- Completion of the full experience is not required; success is measured by each individual's progress and comfort.

ABOUT VIRGIN AUSTRALIA

Founded in the Year 2000 by Sir Richard Branson, Virgin Australia is now one of the largest Australian airlines operating an extensive domestic network as well as short-haul international services, charter and cargo operations. The Group employs more than 8,000 people and has been a competitor in the Australian aviation landscape for 24 years. Virgin Australia is incredibly focused on providing wonderful travel experiences through award-winning service, optionality to fly the way you want to, and value with competitive airfare pricing.

ABOUT ADELAIDE AIRPORT

Adelaide Airport's purpose is to proudly connect and shape South Australia. Our Vision is to be everyone's favourite airport – seamless, connected, easy. Adelaide Airport is the gateway to South Australia enabling the movement of more than eight million passengers as Australia's fifth largest domestic and international airport. Adelaide Airport also owns Parafield Airport - South Australia's principal general aviation airport and one of the largest pilot training airports in the southern hemisphere. Our airport is privately owned and supported by five long-term institutional shareholders that fund the retirements of millions of Australians.