

# News Release

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## **BUY LOCAL - BE FOUND LOCAL**

As we lead up to Christmas Destination Southern Highlands and the Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SHCCI) are encouraging local business to participate in the My Southern Highlands Shop Local Buy Local campaign.

This state and national award winning program provides local businesses with a cost effective way to put their products and services in front of Wingecarribee residents and their family and friends. Local businesses can reward locals via special offers and deals for doing business with them whilst building loyalty and pride in the region and its businesses. Offers can be downloaded from the mysouthernhighlands.net.au website, from the My Southern Highlands Discount Booklet, from the My Southern Highlands free smart phone app or from the My Southern Highlands Scan & Save business cards available at participating businesses, Southern Highlands Information Centre or Council.

In addition, a recent event hosted by SHCCI presented some simple and effective ways that local business can further market themselves locally. Toni Fitzgerald, author and international speaker presented the changing face of business online today. Key amongst this was the move to hyper local - that local search is the new focus.

Local businesses would greatly help their find-ability from locals and tourists alike by spending 2 hours and listing their business in the 3 main free local search sites:

- google my business (also setting up a Google + business site)
- yahoo local
- MSN/ Bing local

Also sign up to the 3 main free directory sites:

- truelocal.com.au
- womo.com.au
- startlocal.com.au

A good way to make your website local-friendly is to make sure there is a map (whereis.com) on your contact us page that is mobile friendly.

On your home page, and in all directory listings, use the direct words that people would be looking for - such as hairdresser in Moss Vale.

Just listing your business these ways will make a difference with 2 out of every 3 customers looking online or via their mobile before buying.

The new game changer however - is to build trust online. How can customers trust that your product or service is quality and value compared to others? The answer is the expanding world of reviews. Check out these review sites:

- [raveaboutit.com.au](http://raveaboutit.com.au)
- [productreview.com.au](http://productreview.com.au)
- [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com)

Reputation marketing is the new growth area and Toni suggested that a business needs 6-10 reviews to claim the business. Take for example the case where I am new to the area and need to go to a dentist. I check on my mobile the listings of dentists (found because they are now listed via the directory sites). One of the dentists has 10 rave reviews, compared to the others that had 1 review or none. Which one would you choose?

Google is moving to aggregate all the review sites together to make it easier to find reviews across all sites, so engaging with this is going to be even more important. 5 star versus no star.

Toni suggested business think of clever ways you can encourage your clients and customers to write a review for you. A startup trampoline business recently gave his clients a free bottle of water if they took a selfie at his facility and posted the image and a review. Postcards and prizes were recommended.

Another must is to have the local information centre know about your business. The Southern Highlands Information Centre managed by Council's Destination Southern Highlands is a 'one stop shop' and gateway for business and visitor information. Staffed by long time locals and experts they are an important referral source and portal.

To be successfully part of a Buy Local campaign is first to be found. Then to be trusted. Southern Highlands business would do well to take advantage of Toni's tips.

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The writer - Kate Ingham External Communications Director with the Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

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