

# FIND IT: BEYOND BETA

## The next phase in the life of Find It online classifieds.

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### Background

Find It is not a traditional technology start-up business. It has not been created with a financial exit strategy and it does not have a profit goal.

Find It has been created to pursue social outcomes. This is why we have not used the traditional funding instruments of a start-up business. It is also why aspects of our journey so far have been unconventional.

From the outset, our goal has been to create a fairer and more accessible advertising medium and newsagents with an online advertising connection.

Along the way we have occasionally wandered from these goals as we have learnt more about online classifieds. However, we keep coming back to where we started. The purpose of this document is to reposition Find It for its post beta life by revisiting our roots and declaring clearly what we stand for.

### The Find It mission is personal

Find It is personal. It's about defining me and what I stand for as much as it is about defining the entire Find It team and providing evidence of our beliefs and commitments. Find It has grown out of what some might call our moral compass.

We seek to make the world a better place, to make a difference to people's lives.

Yes, Find It *is* personal and this is central to our point of difference. Without this we would be another online classifieds site in a crowded market. Being personal is our biggest challenge.

Corporations law dictates that others in online classifieds, Fairfax, News, PBL, Telstra and eBay, focus only on their share price. As a private company we can focus on what we like. As Find It moves out of beta we will refocus on our commitment to make a difference in the world. This personal mission sets us apart, provides us with an advantage and drives all that we do. However, it is a weakness because outcomes we focus on are less tangible.

While most businesses articulate their mission in commercial language, we prefer more personal terms.

Our mission is to deliver **Fair Go Classifieds** to Australia.

## Fair Go Classifieds

Fair Go Classifieds have their foundation in what it is to be Australian. It's about mateship, equality, justice and the belief in the underdog.

Fair Go Classifieds stand for being Australian. This means we stand for:

**Equality.** All ads have equal opportunity, anyone can advertise. Advertisers cannot pay for special ranking or to manipulate search results.

**Justice.** All charities and community groups can advertise anything free forever.

**Taking care of our own.** We are Australian. No revenue is sent overseas.

**Mateship.** Like mates who help each other, we seek nothing in return.

**A belief that underdogs rule.** Our competitors are huge, rich and expensive. We're small, lean and relying on an Aussie fair go to be successful.

**Supporting the Aussie dream.** Too many businesses make too much money out of housing. One way to make the Aussie dream affordable is to make housing advertising affordable.

Individuals, small businesses, charities, community groups and others locked out of mainstream media advertising, where everything has a cost and where share price is all that matters, have a seat at the Fair Go Classifieds table with Find It.

This is not a marketing pitch. Fair Go Classifieds can never be represented as a marketing pitch. It is an invitation to join our mission and put something back for the benefit of all Australians.

The belief in and commitment to Fair Go Classifieds needs to be so deeply entrenched in Find It that it does not need to be stated. It needs to be reflected on every page of the website, in every decision we make and every engagement with others.

## Are other online classified sites unfair?

If we claim the badge of Fair Go Classifieds then are we claiming others are unfair? While it is not up to Find It to judge whether another online classified advertising provider is unfair, there are practices we see in this space which, in our view, are clearly unfair:

**Unnatural search results.** Advertisers paying to get above others in search results.

- This may stop browsers finding what they want. It gives a false result from a search.

**Barriers to entry / gatekeepers.** Anyone ought to be able to place ads online, not just businesses. The Internet was created to be free after all.

- Some real estate sites only accept advertisements from real estate agents.
- Some employment websites only accept advertisements from agencies.
- Many websites charge agents a fraction of what they charge individuals.
- Sites make it easy for businesses and hard for individuals to advertise.

**Sending money overseas.** Millions of dollars in online advertising revenue is sent by Australians to overseas businesses for advertising which runs in Australia.

- eBay bills Australian advertisers out of Switzerland - no fees are collected here.
- News Ltd is more American than Australian.

**Competition.** For over one hundred years classified advertising in Australia has been controlled by a small group of large businesses. While the Internet provided an opportunity to break their stranglehold on advertising outlets, acquisitions over the last few years have denied fulfillment of the opportunity. Research of advertising rates for the major online media companies demonstrates a lack of price competition.

**Community support.** None of Australia's major online classifieds sites offers free classifieds as part of their core brand. While the Fairfax owned cracker.com.au does offer a good range of free listings, it is not obviously connected with or accessed through the Fairfax commercial sites. It is as if they want to keep their connection with cracker quiet.

**Pricing.** Pricing which does not reflect a fair margin on costs is unfair. For example, an employment ad which costs a business under \$2.00 a month to host yet is billed to the advertiser at \$165.00 is, in our view, unfair pricing.

**Unfair auctions.** Online auctions can be unfair. Auction sites, while sometimes providing access to a bargain or a fair and excellent return, can also foster fraud through the manipulation of the auction mechanism. Bids by parties associated with the vendor can see prices inflated beyond the natural market level. This can mean that buyers pay more for a product than through a more transparent sale process.

## What Makes Find It Fair Go Classifieds?

Find It can lay claim the Fair Go Classifieds moniker because of what we offer the community on a broad range of fronts.

1. **Anyone can advertise.** There is no barrier to entry.
2. **All ads are equal.** No one can pay to get higher in the search results.
3. **Search results are natural.** We provide browsers what they are looking for as opposed to what we make money off.
4. **We are an Australian owned company.** All revenues are booked in Australia.
5. **Anyone can start a business online for nothing.** Through our Find It Stores we make it easy for people to start new businesses and we make it easy for existing bricks and mortar businesses to transact online.
6. **We support entrepreneurship.** By making access to online advertising cheaper and easier.
7. **All but two ad categories are free.**
8. **Fair pricing.** For ads that do cost, the price structure is fair.
9. **Price transparency.** By eschewing the auction model we promote price transparency.
10. **We support the community.** All charities and community groups are able to advertise anything without cost.
11. **We support the Australian dream.** Housing advertising is cheaper and available to all.
12. **We support the underdog.** By reducing the barrier to entry and ensuring that all ads are equal, we actively demonstrate our support for the underdog.

What a fair go means at Find It is that our prices, when we do start charging, will reflect a mark up on our costs and not what we think we can get away with. It also means that we will not allow the rich to buy position - all our screen real estate has equal value. And, it means that we treat advertisers and consumers equally - this is reflected in our making advertisements a conversation.

We're not a public company and as such do not have the same obligations in terms of share price. We don't have venture capitalists and are not pursuing an exit strategy.

We are an IT company which believes in a fair go for individuals and small businesses. We have put our money where our mouth is to pursue this ideal.

We have seen charges for online advertising sites go up and up without justification. Just as other advertising became priced out of reach of the little guy, so too will online at this rate. This is why we started Find It, idealistic as it sounds.

Our mission is to provide Australians with an alternative which respects the principles of a fair go. Find It is as much about our Aussie culture as it is about classified advertising.

Being small and under resourced means we are relying on others to spread the word about Find It. We're confident this will happen because Australians believe in a fair go.

## **Proposed pricing**

The pricing model for Find It beyond beta will be a work in progress as we navigate our way to a fair model which provides the funding necessary to run the business and maintains a low barrier to entry for the ad categories in which we do charge.

Our pricing model will remain true to the ideals and commitments of Find It.

The pricing proposed for Find It immediately post beta is as follows:

Individual real estate for sale ads: \$10 for 30 days.

Individual employment ads: \$10 for 30 days.

All other ads on Find It beyond beta will be free. This includes: vehicles, marketplace (eBay type merchandise), business directory, Find It Stores, property for rent, community listings, personal notices.

Our pricing model will evolve over time.

## Post Beta Action Plan

Time is central to our post beta plans. Unlike a typical startup, we're in no hurry to build Find It ad inventory and traffic. We want our growth to be natural and as a result of favorable word of mouth as opposed to paid-for marketing hype.

With all but two ad categories being free there is no commercial imperative to monetise the offering. So, time is on our side and we are prepared for Find It to take as long as necessary to build traffic.

Below in point form is our post beta action plan:

1. Team development – discussion our post beta plans with the full Tower team to seek out champions who will help us raise awareness and be part of our mission to provide Fair Go Classifieds to all Australians.
2. Site.
  - a. Make ad placement as easy as possible at every contact point. Challenge ourselves to aggressively pursue the most exceptional experience possible.
  - b. At end of placing an ad:
    - i. Include a **strong visual call to action** to tell others about the ad and about Find It.
    - ii. Ability to print a flyer promoting the ad and for the advertiser to place in a prominent place. The flyer to be exciting and promoting find as well as the product.
    - iii. Let the advertiser set how they want traffic etc to be communicated. This should improve the advertiser experience re extension of ads.
  - c. On all ad listings and in the same place for all show how much this ad cost to place – i.e. a Find It ad within the ad. This Ad was posted FREE. Click here to post your ad here. Or: This AD costs \$10 for a month. Click here to post your ad here.
  - d. On all emails from the site: strong call to action to tell others about Find It and that all but two ad categories are free.
  - e. On every page of the site a strong and consistent call to action to advertise.
  - f. Mini syndication buttons for advertisers to place on their own business websites: see our job vacancies; visit our online store; or, see our members (for associations)
  - g. Re-engineer editing function:
    - i. Approve all ads at time of placement.

- ii. Introduce a Please Review button which places the ad on a list to review in editing function with only ads requested for review being offered for editing.
  - iii. Promote the user review on the site – empower those who will use Find It.
  - iv. Automatically place ads on the review list if they contain words in a reserved words list, words such as offensive language.
  - v. Editing screen to compress content and focus on the reason why an ad is submitted for editing.
- h. Personalise our contact points. Make it clear who people engage with at Find It and their roles. Ensure that every contact with us is responded to personally.
- i. Newsagent local ad listings – as a precursor to Find It notice boards.
- i. Make it very easy for newsagents to log in and list ads in their area (option of including surrounding).
    - 1. Listings to look professional and include two or three lines per ad.
    - 2. Include an ad for Find It at the bottom: place your ad here – go to [www.findit.com.au](http://www.findit.com.au).
  - ii. Newsagents to be able to select us to email the listing to them.
  - iii. Newsagents to be able to be reminded to print ad listings – email reminder to include a link to ads in their area.
  - iv. On the newsagent page where they do this include use tips:
    - 1. Print this list weekly.
    - 2. Stick it on your front window.
    - 3. They would initially stick on the front window. This would help us assess compliance prior to any investment in notice boards.
- j. Make it easier for people to promote Find It.
- i. Provide bolder and more call to action like *email this to a friend* buttons.
  - ii. Calling people to act in all of our email contacts.
  - iii. Stronger promotion of our house ads – that is, ads which run on our sites.



- iv. Auto creation of A4 posters for people to use to promote their ads.  
Cars, businesses, vacancies.
  - k. Promote Fair Go Classifieds – be a marketing volunteer. Create a landing page from which people can access a range of free materials to promote Find It:
    - 1. Tips on how they can help promote Find It.
    - 2. Order posters to use to promote Find It.
      - a. Start with one poster and maybe have more.
    - 3. Order stickers which promote Find It – for shop windows and cars.
    - 4. Download our Fair Go Classifieds briefing paper.
    - 5. Download any of or syndication options.
    - 6. Easily link to Find It from their website.
    - 7. Provide us with marketing suggestions.
    - 8. Ask us to participate in local speaking opportunities about fairness, online classifieds or how big media is not competitive.
  - l. Catalogues: Allow a group of advertisers to create a catalogue made up of items on offer for a set date and or time range and allow tagging of the every item in the catalogue back to the banner group members. Doing this creates an ad for each item in the catalogue but the opportunity to manage all items at the catalogue level. Also drives banner group members to have a directory entry.
  - m. Coupons. Enable businesses to load coupons which run for a selected date range. Show businesses and ads which have coupon offers – visually denote these as special. Once developed create a coupons landing page to actively promote.
  - n. Stores: Help people start businesses through a robust and professional stores offering.
3. Syndication.
- a. Make syndication of content from other sites to Find It easier and more prominently promoted through a syndicate our content landing page.
  - b. Allow syndication of one ad.

- c. Allow syndication of II content from an advertiser like dealer Solutions does today.
4. From our post launch Find It to be carbon neutral – Australian's first ever 100% carbon neutral classified advertising offering.
5. Newsagents. Given the change in approach reflected in post beta plan it is appropriate that we revisit our plans for newsagents. In summary the plans are:
  - a. Retention of current commission structure.
  - b. Adding to the rebate pool 25% of gross revenues from any banner advertising from 3loves and Find It for the first year of operation. This would be done without contractual change and with a review toward the end of the first years to assess whether it continues.
  - c. Find It notice boards only provided to newsagents actively promoting Find It, taking payments and with current ads placed.

## Post beta marketing

Find It cannot be marketed as one would market any other online classified offering. We are not in their space and they are not in ours. They are commercially focused and we are community focused - hence the view that our marketing cannot be marketing in the traditional sense. The marketing overview is broken down into activities covering: the site, marketing, advertising, missionary and PR.

1. Fair Go campaign:
  - a. Prepare a paper: **Whatever happened to an Aussie fair go?** To be our positioning statement for our Fair Go campaign and out of which our initial post beta PR material flows.
  - b. Create an EPIC 2015 like film in flash based around the paper and promote widely on and off site.
  - c. Contact community groups and offer a presentation around the content of the paper and the film.
  - d. Create Find It business cards: Find It one side and Fair Go on the other side.
2. Site:
  - a. Revise all content about us on the site:
    - i. Logo. Lose the upper tagline.
    - ii. Home page communication. Text and ads to connect with the Fair Go mission.
    - iii. Key landing page communication. Every landing page to speak to the fair go mission and to provide a link to the Fair Go landing page.
    - iv. About us.
    - v. Fair Go. A landing page which outlines our mission and calls people to act in our support.
    - vi. Social responsibility.
    - vii. Newsagents.
  - b. Banner ad:
    - i. Revise initial ad to reflect Fair Go.
    - ii. Develop a new series of banner ads around the fair go theme but always a strong call to action.

- c. Create an in-store newsagent page which would advertise Find It and seek to attract people to place ads in store.
- d. Hire a Find It in-house admin / champion to drive:
  - i. Links on other sites.
  - ii. Comments on other blogs and sites.
  - iii. Support.
  - iv. Soliciting ads from members of associations.
  - v. SEO related activity
  - vi. Marketing – 25% of the position.
  - vii. NOTE: this work list needs to be carefully fleshed out before we hire the person.
- e. SEO:
  - i. Workshop SEO best practice and create a definitive must do guide covering the top 10 things for Find It.
  - ii. More SEO robust landing pages for top search categories such as cars, real-estate etc. Consider using an SEO expert to tell us where we are going wrong.

### 3. Marketing

- a. Immediately in post beta in a staggered campaign to supplement PR:
  - i. Direct mail to charities and associations promoting free and offering flyers for their members.
  - ii. Direct mail to councils to promote through their newsletter and on their website.
  - iii. Direct mail to conveyancers and the broader community selling real estate outside of traditional agents to promote our gatekeeper free approach.
- b. Direct mail and or fax to announce to all car dealers that we are free for cars.

### 4. Advertising

- a. Launch multiple small Google AdWords campaigns with each campaign to take you directly to the landing page for the target category from where people can click to place an ad:
  - i. Garage sales;
  - ii. Share accommodation;

- iii. Rental properties;
  - iv. Sell your car;
  - v. Birth notices;
  - vi. Congratulations;
  - vii. Lost and Found;
  - viii. Events;
  - ix. Classifieds;
  - x. Tradesmen listings;
  - xi. Restaurant listings;
  - xii. Obituaries;
  - xiii. Employment ads
- b. Paid advertising in Crikey. Take a three month commitment to promote Find It and our free offering in Crikey – if Crikey unlocks a suitable lucrative deal for us. Assess. Renew if strong click through.
5. Missionary
- a. Rear window of company vehicles.
  - b. Posters for participating newsagents at launch of post beta strategy.
  - c. Stickers to go on the window of any business listing in the directory.
  - d. Connect with like-minded people and businesses who would be willing to promote Find It.
  - e. Flyers for community groups. Black and white and built around the community call to action.
6. PR. Public Relations effort will be the most significant part of our marketing investment. PR to be released through traditional media and extensively online through outlets such as PRWeb to ensure maximum online exposure. Main press focus to cover over time:
- a. Fair Go Classifieds mission
  - b. Find It being carbon neutral.
  - c. The moral compass in business.
  - d. Free car ads.
  - e. Free rental accommodation ads.
  - f. Direct vendor advertising for real-estate.

- g. Low cost employment ads.
  - h. Free business directory services.
  - i. Free Find It stores fostering micro businesses and entrepreneurship.
  - j. Free catalogues
7. Newsagents. Creation of materials available to support Find It profile in newsagencies:
- a. Posters – generic and designed to drive content.
  - b. Window stickers provided to all newsagents including Find It newsagents
  - c. Offer rear vehicle window?
  - d. Find It noticeboards for selected newsagents.
8. Promoting Find It to like minded organisations:
- a. Southern Sydney Retailers Association
  - b. Dick Smith Foods.
  - c. Pro Bono Australia

Most of this activity is in the period immediately after the site moves into its post beta phase. The marketing plan will need to be reviewed regularly and adjusted based on traffic and content attracted.

The challenge is to cost effectively and appropriately market what is, for the most part, free service and to do this in a way which pitched Find It as a community service.

## 3loves

For 3loves to cover its costs we need a site which generates excellent word of mouth, is regularly visited by members and which easily delivers on the promise of a good browsing outcome.

1. Refresh site design.
2. Fair Go campaign:

## Appendix A: What is a fair go?

The belief in a **fair go** is central to being Australian. It is a socialist ideal which has propelled our countrymen through drought, war, depression and this era of globalisation. It is a belief in equality and justice and that underdogs rule.

Our belief in a fair go is what we think separates Australians from other cultures. Whether it does or does not, what matters is that Australians believe in a Fair Go, they want it for themselves and their fellow countrymen.

Being fair is about being free from bias, dishonesty, or injustice.

A fair go is giving the little guy the same opportunity as the big guy.



## Whatever happened to an Aussie Fair Go?

If you want to sell a car in Australia you can choose between carsales, carsguide, drive, tradtngpost and ebaymotors.

Five great sites competing for your advertising dollars. Or so we think.

These sites from News, PBL, Fairfax, Telstra and eBay account for 99% of all cars advertised in this country.

They don't compete as much as you'd expect. Take a 2004 Commodore which you want to sell for, say, \$10,000.

Your ad at each site will cost the same and look the same. What happened to competition?

The rivalry between newspaper publishers for classified advertising decades ago is the stuff of legends. Aggressive competition on price and service. Consumers rewarded the competition with rivers of gold in classified advertising revenue. There was enough to go around to make newspaper publishers rich.

So why is it that that we have no competition today? Why is it that consumers pay the same price for an amazingly similar service on each of the five vehicle websites?

Maybe the answer has to do with the margin made from an online advertisement.

An average car ad costs less than a dollar for these media companies to 'host' The rest is margin which covers the cost of marketing and not much else.

It suits News, PBL, Fairfax, Telstra and eBay to charge similar fees because one rocking the boat will force the others to trim their margin.

With more than 100,000 cars advertised at any point in time the numbers are compelling.

But, a closer examination reveals that all is not as it seems.

News, PBL, Fairfax, Telstra and eBay play favorites. It's only mug punters like average Australians paying \$XX per car ad. The dealers pay a fraction of this. Some just a few dollars per car.

The mates rates of News, PBL, Fairfax, Telstra and eBay sites means that car dealers pay a fraction of which you or I would pay. Where we pay around \$25 to advertise a car, a business mate of the publisher will pay a dollar or less. Their cheap ads bring the traffic which enables the publishers to charge us individuals a heap more.

What's worse is that these sites by News, PBL, Fairfax, Telstra and eBay look after their mates by putting their ads first. These mates pay to get in front of other ads, they pay to create unnatural search results.

For individuals advertising cars it is harder to be found thanks to these unnatural results.

And not just with vehicle ads. It's happening with property, employment and even general merchandise ads.

What happened to the Aussie fair go?

The belief in a **fair go** is central to being Australian. It is a socialist ideal which has propelled our countrymen through drought, war, depression and this era of globalisation. It is a belief in equality and justice and that underdogs rule.

Our belief in a fair go is what we think separates Australians from other cultures. Whether it does or does not, what matters is that Australians believe in a Fair Go, they want it for themselves and their fellow countrymen.

Being fair is about being free from bias, dishonesty, or injustice.

A fair go is giving the little guy the same opportunity as the big guy. A fair go is about charging a fair price for your product or service.

Australians are being ripped off by News, PBL, Fairfax, Telstra and eBay when it comes to online advertising. They are gouging an unsuspecting market and making unfair windfall profits.

Take an employment ad at Seek.com.au. They charge \$165.00 for a month and it costs them around \$1.00 to host the ad. That's an extraordinary windfall for Seek and one of their shareholders PBL.

Take a real estate ad at realestate.com.au. Have you looked at what it would cost to advertise your house there? You can't. Realestate.com.au, Australia's most successful online real estate site, is not available to you and me. Only real estate agents can advertise there. This is so they can control the price to vendors. I was charged \$100 a month by one agent and I know now that the ad cost them less than \$1.00 a month.

Where is the Aussie fair go in that?

FLASH

The rivalry between newspaper publishers in the same city is the stuff of legends. Aggressive competition on price and service. Consumers rewarded the competition with rivers of gold in classified advertising revenue. There was enough to go around to make newspaper publishers rich, so much so that the Government ensured competition continued.

Fast forward thirty years and newspaper classifieds are migrating online.