



John Barilaro

Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional NSW
Minister for Industry and Trade

Damien Tudehope

Minister for Finance and Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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GIVE THE BEST GIFT THIS CHRISTMAS AND #BUYREGIONAL

Sydneysiders keen to help drought-stricken towns can easily buy Christmas presents and produce direct from regional retailers, with the help of a new NSW Government campaign that connects city shoppers with rural sellers.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW John Barilaro, Minister for Small Business Damien Tudehope, renowned chef Matt Moran and the founders of online communities #BuyFromTheBush and #OneDayCloserToRain today attended the launch of the NSW Government's Buy Regional campaign at the Sydney Fish Markets.

Mr Barilaro said Buy Regional is an online hub that showcases regional shops and sellers together in one place, to make it easy for shoppers to find the perfect Christmas gift and support regional NSW.

"Everywhere I go people tell me about the images they've seen and the stories they've heard of how drought is affecting people in the bush and that they want to do something to help, but they're not sure how," Mr Barilaro said.

"Every dollar you spend with a regional retailer or producer helps keep that small business afloat, supports jobs in that town and gets money flowing through the local economy, which is exactly what is needed while we wait for the drought to break.

"Regional businesses can participate in the Buy Regional hub and social media network for free by simply registering online," he said.

The hub already features businesses from some of the hardest hit areas of the state, including Broken Hill, Coonamble, Inverell and White Cliffs.

Mr Tudehope said the Buy Regional hub is divided into six categories, Wine, Fashion, Food, Gifts for Kids, Art & Design, and Christmas hampers, to help shoppers easily find gifts for that special someone.

"I've heard loud and clear what regional small businesses struggling through the drought have had to say, that there are fewer walk-in customers, that margins are tighter and that owners are under enormous pressure," Mr Tudehope said.

"The quality and variety of products available from regional NSW retailers remains world class and the Buy Regional campaign will directly connect shoppers in cities wanting to buy, with businesses in the bush that have goods to sell," he said.

#BuyFromTheBush founder Grace Brennan said she turned to social media to help businesses find new customers outside of their drought stricken communities and was amazed when the number of followers skyrocketed from zero to 26,000 in eight days.

"This all started as a hashtag on social media but it's become so powerful because it's a simple way for people in the city who want to spend their money in the bush to see beautiful things they like and buy them," Ms Brennan said.

“Not everyone has an online presence but businesses are thinking outside the box. Just the other day I walked in on a business where the shopkeeper was showing dresses to a customer on a video call and she was picking out what she wanted.

“It just shows that there are so many people out there who want to help and it’s incredible that in such a short space of time that so many regional businesses are making connections with shoppers in the city and some have even sold out of stock.”

Facebook group #OneDayCloserToRain is connecting people on the land who are struggling with drought, providing a life line for those who need to share their stories.

The group has launched a marketplace to help regional people create income streams by selling their locally produced arts and design work to city people keen to help.

As well as buying gifts from regional retailers, Mr Barilaro encouraged Sydneysiders planning festive get togethers and Christmas Day feasts to consider buying meat, produce and hampers from regional NSW.

“Favour the flavour of regional NSW and ask your Sydney butcher or greengrocer for meat, poultry and produce provided by NSW farmers or check out the Buy Regional hub for honey, preserves, veg, meat or even fully-stocked hampers, all sourced from our regions,” Mr Barilaro said.

#Thankful4Farmers ambassador Matt Moran said in lieu of drought breaking rain, farmers across regional NSW need the support of the grocery buying public.

“As a fourth generation farmer I know firsthand the blood, sweat and tears that goes into producing our food during times of drought and every product purchased will show our farming and rural communities how much they are valued ,” Mr Moran said.

Mr Barilaro thanked the founders and supporters of all the online entrepreneurs helping connect regional businesses to city shoppers, along with organisations that are providing support on top of the NSW Government’s drought package.

“Charities and volunteers are also doing great work, organisations like Buy A Bale and Foodbank NSW which is providing more than 15,000 hampers to farming communities and I thank them for their kindness and generosity,” Mr Barilaro said.

“To date, more than \$988 million from the NSW Government’s \$1.8 billion Emergency Drought Relief Package has been spent and we have committed a further \$988 million to build 175 water infrastructure projects under the Safe and Secure Water program.”

The Buy Regional for Christmas hub is at: www.nsw.gov.au/buyregional

**MEDIA: Georgina Kentwell | Deputy Premier | 0427 206 308
Kylie Adoranti | Minister Tudehope | 0439 085 013**