



Live Local

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A new social media site for "[experiments in local living](#)" has been [launched](#) called "[Live Local](#)" which should be of interest to those of you interested in relocalisation and related ideas like the Transition Towns movement.

The site aims to be "a place to share stories and ideas about improving your community", with the user generated ideas and stories being dubbed "experiments".



live local is a project which we've developed as a joint social venture with Piers Dawson-Damer. The website is a place to share stories about improving our communities. It makes it easy for local residents to document their experiences and adventures meeting neighbours, discovering neighbourhoods, supporting local economies, saving energy, water and much more.

At its heart the project encourages people to take more time to connect and engage with their community. I think its clear the alternative; working crazy hours to earn more money to more buy 'stuff' while leaving us little time to get to know our neighbours and spend time with family and friends, has spectacularly failed. Many of us crave a smarter way of living; one that makes us happier.

As part of the launch of the site, they have issued the "[live local challenge](#)", which encourages people to "live local" for a week.

In honour of [the launch] we have a few exciting things happening. Perhaps most exciting of all (next to the launch itself, which is of course hyperactively exciting) is the live local challenge. Two fantastic Sydney-area ladies, Kate Carruthers and [Rebecca Varidel](#), will be living local for seven straight days starting next Wednesday, and blogging and Twittering about it all the while.

You can follow their progress here, and also in real time by following them: [@kcarruthers](#) and [@frombecca](#). (You can follow us, too: [@livelocal](#))

Better still, take the challenge yourself and compare notes and experiences. Here's the brief:

Your challenge is to live local for a week – seven days – and to document your efforts to

do so. You can do this anytime.

What is living local?

To live local is to make the most of your community.

- * meeting your neighbours and the people who work in your community
- * eating delicious food grown as close to where you live as possible
- * minimising use of fossil fuels, especially for transport*

* This will be the hardest one for a lot of people. Walking, bicycles and public transit are good ways to reduce (and to keep you closer to your own neighbourhood!). But this challenge is about experimenting and being creative, not about absolutes. See rules #2 and #3 below. ...

I was somewhat surprised to get invited to the launch of the site (apparently I now count as "media", at least in green circles), which was held at a great little bar and restaurant in Surry Hills called "[Table For 20](#)" (with organic beer coming from the guys around the corner at [Single Origin](#)).

Most of the attendees really were inner eastern suburbs locals, but the restaurant did struggle a little to create a truly local meal, with some ingredients coming from more than 500 km away (it was great food, but 500 km+ probably doesn't count as part of the local "foodshed"), and was a good example of the difficulty of trying to apply relocalisation ideas to large metropolises like Sydney.

I was lucky enough to be sitting with a good group of people - Guy Rundle from [Crikey](#) (whom I've quoted here from time to time), Peter from [Transition Sydney](#), Roland from [New Matilda](#), Mickie from Channel 10's [Guerilla Gardeners](#) show, [Dan Cass](#) and the lovely [Jess](#) from Digital Eskimo and Friends of the Earth.

The live local project officially greets the world today. To our pre-launch members, thanks for all your help and experimentation. To our new members: Hey, very glad you're here. Make yourself at home.

To kick things off, we had a few people over for dinner last night, and we've got some details and photos after the jump.

Our launch dinner was held at Table for 20 in the Sydney suburb of Surry Hills. It's a wonderful space with a deliberately communal atmosphere and a commendable local focus. Everyone dines together at two long tables (each of which seats 20) and food is shared and passed around à la family dining table.

The dinner guests included gardeners, politicians, businesspeople, media personalities and behind-the-scenesters, sustainability experts, community organisers ... and Chris Gaul and Jeremy Epstein, the designer and developer, respectively, of this site (who don't get nearly enough credit), and Kate Bedwell, who ran the event like a pro.

It all started with me doing my best impression of a talented MC. I then introduced Dave Gravina and Piers Dawson-Damer, who in turn introduced the project to the room.

Table for 20 owner Michael Fantuz then told us what we were eating. We had challenged him to make the meal as local as possible ... which surely conflicted with his usual mandate to get the best food possible. So his description of the homemade food

included the number of kilometres it had travelled to get to our tables. Michael wouldn't compromise on cheese – it travelled furthest, from Victoria (the closest place to get real buffalo mozzarella, it turns out); the tomatoes and basil came from Michael's father's garden, about 15 kilometres from Surry Hills. Not a bad effort, and a good learning experience.

The vibe in the room was superpositive, with 40 people who love communities sharing food and stories. Michael Mobbs, a sustainability consultant and (I'm assigning this title to him) community activist, gave a talk about his various projects in Chippendale; the rest of the room was wowed (and surely inspired) by his wry tales of local composting, stingless native bees, community gardening and more. The rest of the room was also probably scared by his contention that Australia will suffer food scarcity within the next 5 to 10 years.

After the most delicious pappardelle of my life (wow, there's some ironic distance between this paragraph and the previous one), I introduced Mickie Quick, an artist, designer and community activist who moonlights on Channel 10's Guerrilla Gardeners. He talked about the boundaries, both real and imagined, that hinder positive social change – communities have power to encourage creativity, but also to stifle it. Mickie's prescription for de-stifling, and for inspiring more vibrant communities in general, was to take risks. To try stuff. To experiment. Which is precisely what live local is about.

Finally, we introduced our first live local challengees, Rebecca Varidel and Kate Carruthers, who have embarked today on the first of seven straight days of trying to live locally.

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