

A FREE GUIDE FOR SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS HOMEOWNERS

The Sell For More Guide.

What the research says about presenting a Highlands home,
and what it is worth when you get it right.

Bowral vendors are accepting about 7.7 percent below asking. Published research puts the value of presentation at up to 7 percent. This guide is about that gap.

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START HERE

The gap nobody mentions at the appraisal.

Agents talk about the market and the comparable sales. What rarely gets said is what happens between the price you ask and the price you get.

\$1.5m

Bowral median house price, twelve months to September 2026 (Cotality)

89 days

Median time on market, Bowral houses. Mittagong 58 (Cotality)

7.7%

Average gap between asking and sold in Bowral. Mittagong 7.6% (Cotality)

Two numbers that are the same size

Bowral, asking to sold



Presentation premium, research



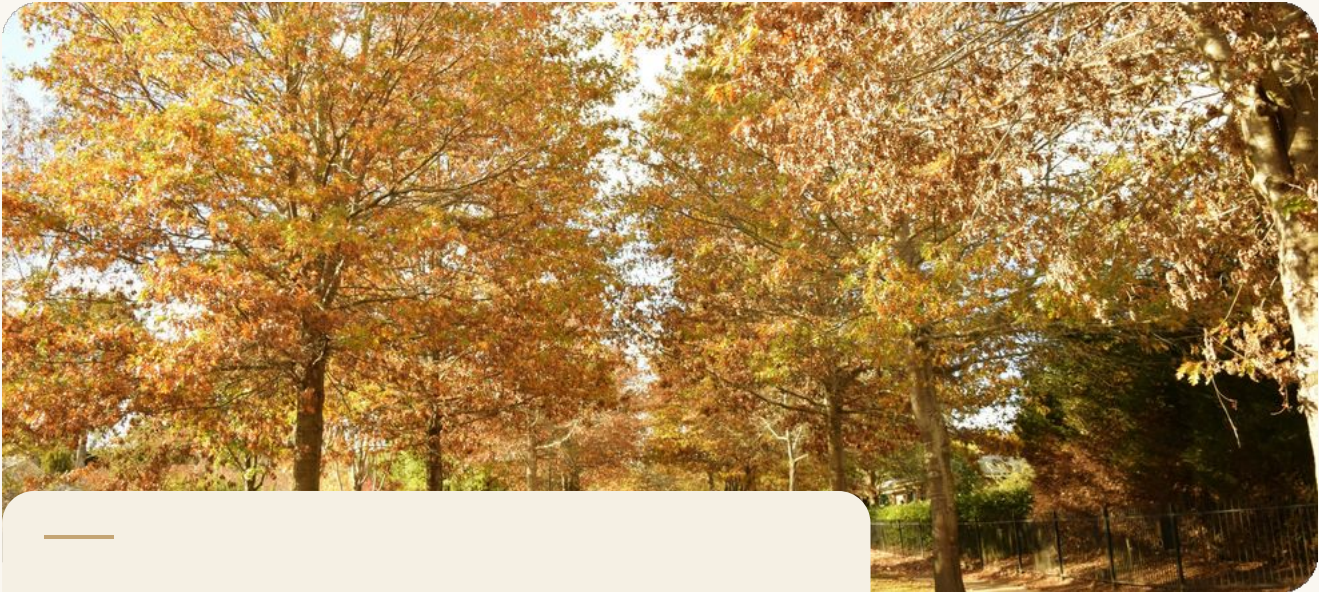
Same premium, slow market



Sources: Cotality suburb data, Sep 2026. Johnson, Tidwell and Villupuram, Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics, 2020.

On a median Bowral home 7.7 percent is about \$115,000. A 2020 study in the Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics measured what street presentation does to sale prices and found **up to 7 percent**, rising to 10 or 11 percent when buyers have plenty of choice. We are not saying one number causes the other. We are saying they are the same size and presentation is the one a vendor controls.

Presentation is the part of the sale price that the vendor, not the market, gets to decide.



PART ONE

Who is walking through your open home.

Usually a couple from Sydney, often paying cash and by the numbers they have been looking for most of a year.

How long the average Australian buyer has been searching



Source: realestate.com.au Property Seeker Survey 2024, 13,400 respondents.

Local agents report that 60 to 70 percent of Highlands lifestyle buyers are paying cash after a Sydney sale. They have choice and they are not in a hurry. By the time they reach your open home in Moss Vale they have walked through dozens of others, many styled to sell.

Your home is not being judged. It is being compared.

PART TWO

The first 7 percent is decided from the driveway.

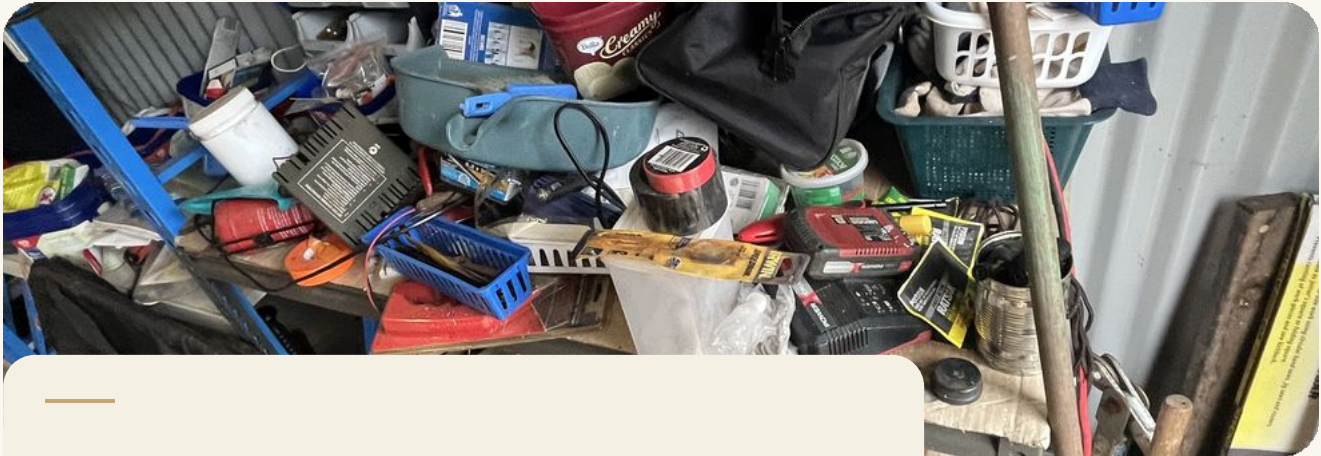
Highlands homes are seen from the road before anything else. The study found a home's own street presentation was worth twice that of its neighbours and the whole effect up to 7 percent of price. Here is what the buyer reads from the gate.

From the road	What the buyer reads
Driveway and entry clear, no trailers in view	Looked after. Nothing hidden.
Lawn cut, edges done, paths swept	Manageable. I could keep this up.
Carport and verandah empty of storage	There is room. The photos were honest.
Sheds closed, yard clear of machinery	No work waiting for me.
Fences and gate in order	The boundaries are sound.



A Southern Highlands shed line prepared for sale by Downsize Detail. Same sheds, same paddock, one clear.

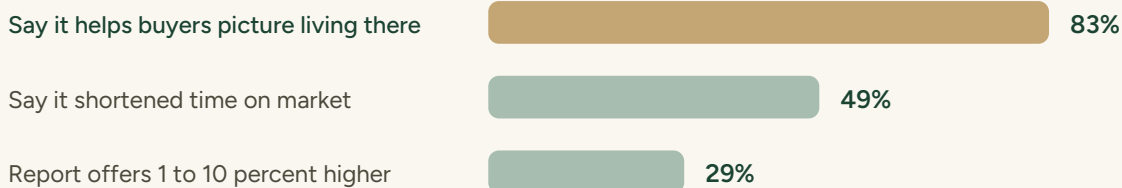
In the Highlands the open home starts at the gate. Most buyers have decided how they feel before they have parked.



PART THREE

Inside, the buyer is not inspecting. They are imagining.

A 2025 survey of 1,266 real estate agents asked what presentation does for buyers.



Buyers' agents and sellers' agents, 2025 Profile of Home Staging, margin of error 2.75 percent.

The rooms that mattered most were the living room, the main bedroom and the kitchen. Now think about what a buyer cannot imagine: their car in a garage they could not walk into, a guest in a spare room that is really a storage room. Clutter does not just look untidy. It removes rooms from the sale.

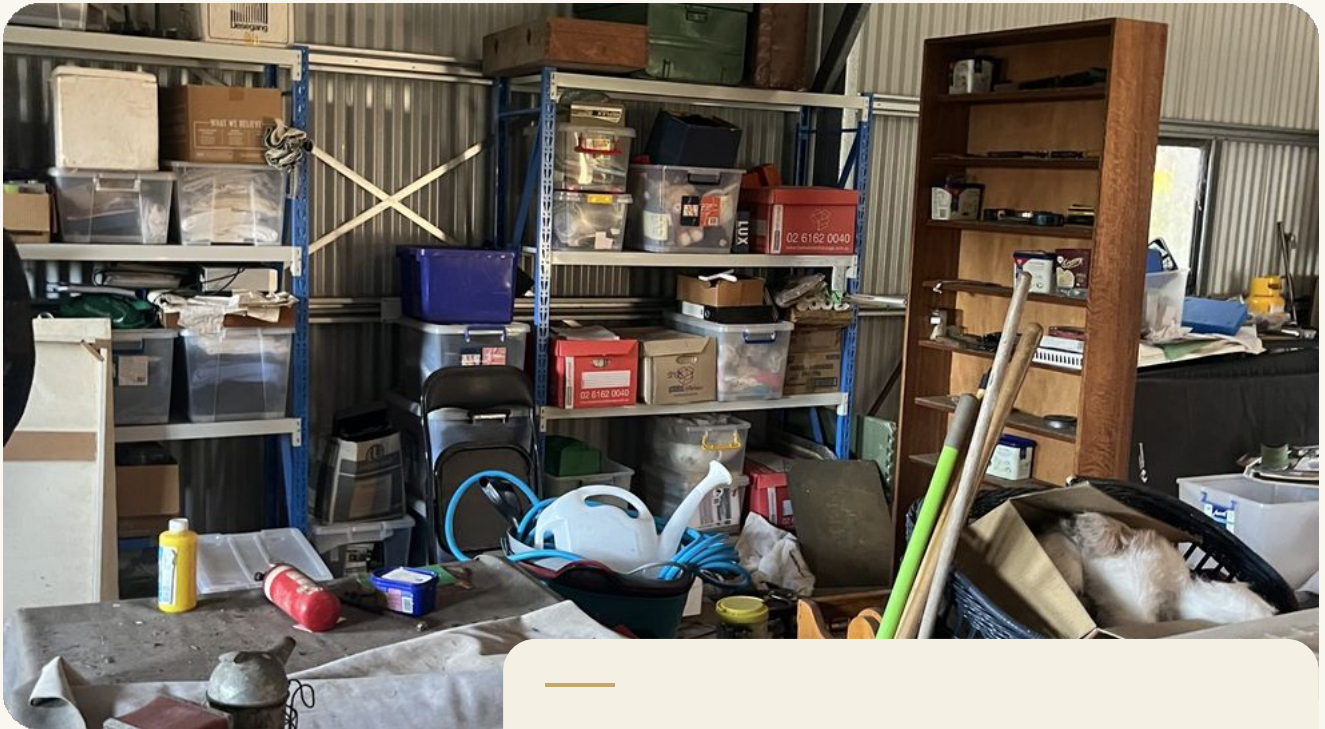
There is a reason for this. Brain imaging research published in the Journal of Neuroscience shows that objects in view compete for attention. The more there is to look at, the less the brain can settle on any of it. A buyer in a full double garage is not seeing a double garage.

Clear the floor and the buyer sees the room. Leave it and they see the work.

PART FOUR

Why you stopped seeing it years ago.

Vendors are not careless. They are human. Research published in 2025 in the Journal of Environmental Psychology found that the more clutter people live with, the less beautiful they rate their own home. After twenty years you are the last person who can see it the way a buyer will on Saturday. A separate study tracking stress hormones found people who described their home as cluttered or unfinished showed the cortisol pattern linked to chronic stress. The shed is not just costing you at the sale. It has been costing you all along.



Twenty years of "I'll get to it". The buyer sees it in eleven seconds.

PART FIVE

What to fix first, in order.

Not everything is worth doing. This is the order we run a Highlands property, from what moves the price most to what simply has to happen before photos.

	Area	Why here
1	The approach: driveway, entry, front garden, anything seen from the road	Worth up to 7 percent on its own. Seen first, seen by everyone, in the first listing photo.
2	Garage, sheds, under house, machinery in the yard	The biggest source of clutter on a Highlands property. Gives the buyer back whole rooms. Anything of value is sold before anything is thrown away.
3	Living room, main bedroom, kitchen	The three rooms buyers imagine themselves in. Clear surfaces, less furniture.
4	Trades: paint touch ups, gutters, taps, the agent's list	Small jobs that signal maintenance. Book early, before the deadline premium.
5	Styling and the final clean	Only once everything above is done. Styling a cluttered home is decoration.

How long it takes: about two months, done properly

WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4	WK 5	WK 6	WK 7	WK 8
Decide, family	The approach	Find the value	The big clear	Three rooms	Trades	Garden again	Style, photos

Researchers who followed households clearing a long held home found it took about two months and ran in a predictable order. Bowral homes currently take around three months to sell. If you start when the agent books the photographer, you have already run out of time. The full week by week plan is in our free Two Month Countdown.

NEXT STEPS

Two free ways to find out where your property stands.

Downsize Detail project manages everything a Highlands home needs before market, to one fixed price after one visit, with one point of contact from first walk through to settlement. Start with whichever of these suits you.

FREE · 2 MINUTES · NO OBLIGATION

Get your free property scorecard and personalised report.

Sixteen quick questions about your home and your timeline. You get a score across the five areas that decide what a Highlands home sells for, plus a personalised report on what to fix first.

Go to downsizedetail.com.au and take the Sell For More Scorecard.

FREE · 15 MINUTES · PERSONALISED

Book a free 15 minute personalised video call.

Talk through your property with Downsize Detail and hear what it needs, in what order and roughly what it involves. No forms, no pressure. If it is not for you, you still leave with a plan.

Go to downsizedetail.com.au and book your free 15 minute video call.

Prefer to talk now? Call Downsize Detail on **0434 395 387**.

Bowral, Mittagong, Moss Vale, Robertson and the Southern Highlands.



WHERE THE NUMBERS COME FROM

The research behind this guide.

We only quote figures we can point to. Every study below is published and peer reviewed unless marked otherwise. Local market figures are dated because they move.

Johnson, E., Tidwell, A. and Villupuram, S. (2020). Valuing Curb Appeal. Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics, 60, 111 to 133.

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Quinn, F. (2025). Home clutter and mental well being. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 105.

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Cotality (formerly CoreLogic) suburb data, Bowral 2576 and Mittagong 2575, twelve months to September 2026.

General information for Southern Highlands homeowners, not financial, legal or valuation advice. Market figures are correct at the date shown and will change. Research findings describe averages across the studied groups, not a promise about any individual property. Photography shows Southern Highlands properties prepared by Downsize Detail.