

PORT JACKSON WORKSHOP · FREE COURSE · DO IT YOURSELF SERIES

Run Your Own Ads

How to run Google Ads for a small Australian business yourself — or buy management on your terms — without paying for results nobody defined

WHO THIS IS FOR

Owners of Australian service businesses (trades, allied health, home and local services) spending or about to spend A\$1,000–5,000 a month on Google Ads, who are either paying an agency they cannot evaluate or thinking of hiring one.

WHAT YOU WILL HAVE AT THE END

A live search campaign you built, with lead tracking you tested, a weekly 30-minute routine using a free AI assistant to do the reading, a baseline you can hold any agency to, and a written 90-day decision: keep doing it yourself, buy management informed, or stop the channel.

Christine de Vries · Port Jackson Group · v1.0 · 3 September 2026 · Free to read, copy and share unchanged with this notice. This course names no company, coach or product. Every figure is an estimate to check against your own numbers. It is general information, not financial, legal or tax advice. Nothing is sold inside it.

How to use this course

Six modules, one to two hours each, in order. Every lesson ends with a 'Do this now' box; do it before reading on. The worksheets are in the appendix — copy them into a spreadsheet. Costs stated are typical Australian figures in September 2026 and will move; check them against the live price pages. The course does not require any paid tool beyond Google Ads spend itself and, optionally, an AI assistant subscription.

Course map

Module	Lessons	You finish with
Define a lead before you spend a dollar	What a conversion really is · Your baseline: what the last 90 days actually cost · The minimum spend test	A written lead definition, a real baseline (or an honest 'unknown'), and a monthly budget you can afford to lose.
Track leads yourself (the part agencies keep)	Own the accounts · Install the two conversions · Optional: call recording	Two conversion actions firing from a real test call and a real test form, screenshots kept.
Build one campaign that can be judged	Structure: one campaign, few ad groups · Negatives: the free half of every budget · Ads written with AI, approved by you	A live campaign built to the structure sheet, approved ads, negatives loaded.
The 30-minute weekly routine	Read the search terms (15 minutes) · Check pacing and cost per lead (5 minutes) · Refresh ads and budget (10 minutes, fortnightly)	Four weeks of the routine logged on W5.
How to read an agency report, and how to hire one	The seven questions · Reading the before/after wall	A completed W6 against any proposal, and a contract you can leave.
The 90-day decision	The three forks · If you have no budget yet	A dated decision: keep DIY, buy informed, or stop the channel — with the numbers that made it.

Module 1 — Define a lead before you spend a dollar

Most disappointment in Google Ads comes from one word: 'conversion'. Agencies count it; nobody defines it. This module fixes that before any money moves.

Lesson 1.1 — What a conversion really is

In Google Ads a 'conversion' is anything you tell it to count: a purchase, a phone call, a form, a click on a phone number, a visit to a page, a scroll. An agency report showing 382 conversions at A\$0.77 each is usually counting button clicks and map taps, not customers.

There are only two events worth calling a lead for a service business: a phone call from the ad that lasts more than 60 seconds, and an enquiry form that reaches a thank-you page. Everything else is a signal, not a lead.

DO THIS NOW

Write your lead definition in one sentence and put it at the top of the Baseline sheet. Example: 'A lead is a call over 60 seconds or a completed quote form.'

Check: Could a stranger count your leads from your definition without asking you anything? If not, tighten it.

Worksheet: W1 Baseline (Appendix)

Lesson 1.2 — Your baseline: what the last 90 days actually cost

If you already advertise, export the last 90 days from Google Ads (Reports → Campaigns → last 90 days) and from whatever your agency sent. Fill in spend, clicks, and what was counted. Then count real leads under your definition from your phone log and inbox — even roughly.

If nothing was tracked, your baseline is 'unknown', and you write that. An unknown baseline is honest; an invented one is what you will be sold against.

DO THIS NOW

Complete W1 for the last 90 days: spend, clicks, reported conversions, real leads, cost per real lead.

Check: Is your cost per real lead within a factor of two of what a job is worth to you? If it is ten times higher, ads are not your problem yet.

Worksheet: W1 Baseline (Appendix)

Lesson 1.3 — The minimum spend test

Search campaigns need data to work. Below about A\$1,500 a month in most Australian trades you will not get enough clicks in 90 days to judge anything, and an honest manager will tell you so. If your budget is under that, spend the next 90 days on your Google Business Profile, reviews and a clean website instead — all free.

Set the monthly budget as a number you can lose entirely without stress. Google spends it whether the ads work or not.

DO THIS NOW

Write your monthly budget and your daily budget (monthly ÷ 30.4) on W1. If monthly is under A\$1,500, stop here and do Module 6 first.

Worksheet: W1 Baseline (Appendix)

MODULE 1 — YOU ARE DONE WHEN

A written lead definition, a real baseline (or an honest 'unknown'), and a monthly budget you can afford to lose.

Module 2 — Track leads yourself (the part agencies keep)

Tracking is the product. Whoever controls it controls the story. This module puts it in your account, under your login.

Lesson 2.1 — Own the accounts

Create or claim the Google Ads account under your own business Google login. Never let anyone build it under theirs — if you leave, the history, the tracking and the phone numbers go with them. Any manager gets 'manager access' to your account, not ownership.

Do the same for Google Analytics 4 and Google Tag Manager. Three accounts, all yours, all free.

DO THIS NOW

Log into ads.google.com, analytics.google.com and tagmanager.google.com with your business login. Write the three account IDs on W2.

Worksheet: W2 Tracking test (Appendix)

Lesson 2.2 — Install the two conversions

In Google Ads, Goals → Conversions → New: (1) 'Calls from ads', set the minimum call length to 60 seconds; (2) 'Website form' — the simplest reliable way is to send the form to a thank-you page (/thanks) and count a visit to that page as the conversion via Tag Manager. Mark both as Primary. Mark everything else Secondary.

If you use a web form that does not redirect, ask your web person for a thank-you page; it is a ten-minute job.

DO THIS NOW

Set up both conversions. Then place a real test call from a mobile and submit a real test form. Wait up to 24 hours and screenshot both showing in Conversions.

Check: Two screenshots in your folder, dated. Without them, nothing you are told later is checkable.

Worksheet: W2 Tracking test (Appendix)

Lesson 2.3 — Optional: call recording

A call-tracking service (Australian providers start around A\$60 a month) records calls and gives you a number per source. It is the only way to know whether the 60-second calls were customers or salespeople. It is optional at A\$1,500 spend and worth it above A\$3,000.

DO THIS NOW

Decide yes or no on call tracking and write the reason on W2.

Worksheet: W2 Tracking test (Appendix)

MODULE 2 — YOU ARE DONE WHEN

Two conversion actions firing from a real test call and a real test form, screenshots kept.

Module 3 — Build one campaign that can be judged

One search campaign, three to five ad groups, exact and phrase match, a real negative list. That is the whole build. Complexity comes later or never.

Lesson 3.1 — Structure: one campaign, few ad groups

Campaign type: Search only (untick Display and Search Partners). Location: the radius you actually service, not the state. One ad group per service you sell — 'hot water repair', 'blocked drains' — three to five in total. Keywords in exact match [hot water repair perth] and phrase match "hot water repair"; no broad match yet.

Bidding: start on 'Maximise clicks' with a cost-per-click cap, and move to 'Maximise conversions' only after 30 conversions have been recorded.

DO THIS NOW

Fill W3 Structure with your ad groups and 5–10 keywords each before touching the interface. Then build it exactly as written.

Worksheet: W3 Structure (Appendix)

Lesson 3.2 — Negatives: the free half of every budget

Around a third of first-month spend in most trades goes to searches you never wanted: jobs, courses, DIY, free, other suburbs, other trades. A negative keyword list stops that. Start with the list in Appendix W4 (about 120 lines for service businesses) and add your own.

DO THIS NOW

Load the W4 negative list at campaign level. Add ten of your own — the suburbs you don't service, the products you don't sell.

Worksheet: W4 Negative list (Appendix)

Lesson 3.3 — Ads written with AI, approved by you

A responsive search ad takes up to 15 headlines (30 characters) and 4 descriptions (90 characters). Ask a free AI assistant for them with this prompt, then edit for truth: 'Write 15 Google Ads headlines under 30 characters and 4 descriptions under 90 characters for a [trade] in [suburb]. Include the suburb, one price signal, one trust signal I can prove (licence number, years, guarantee). No superlatives, no claims I cannot substantiate.'

Delete anything you cannot prove. Australian Consumer Law applies to your ads exactly as it applies to the agency's.

DO THIS NOW

Generate, edit, and load one responsive search ad per ad group. Set the campaign live at your daily budget.

Check: Every headline true? Every claim provable? Suburb correct?

Worksheet: W3 Structure (Appendix)

MODULE 3 — YOU ARE DONE WHEN

A live campaign built to the structure sheet, approved ads, negatives loaded.

Module 4 — The 30-minute weekly routine

Management is a routine, not a skill. This is what a good manager does each week; with an AI assistant reading the reports, it takes you half an hour.

Lesson 4.1 — Read the search terms (15 minutes)

Google Ads → Insights and reports → Search terms → last 7 days → download. Paste it into your AI assistant with: 'Here is a week of Google Ads search terms with clicks, cost and conversions for a [trade] in [city]. Sort into: buyers, researchers, irrelevant, competitors, job seekers. List the exact negatives to add and any search term with a conversion I should add as an exact-match keyword.'

Read the list. You are the approval step. Then add the negatives and keywords in the interface.

DO THIS NOW

Do it this week and log the negatives added and keywords added on W5.

Worksheet: W5 Weekly log (Appendix)

Lesson 4.2 — Check pacing and cost per lead (5 minutes)

$\text{Spend to date} \div \text{days elapsed} \times 30.4$ should be within 20% of your monthly budget. Cost per lead = $\text{spend} \div \text{real leads (calls over 60s + forms)}$. If cost per lead is above what a job is worth, do nothing dramatic for four weeks; new campaigns need data. After four weeks, if it is still above, go to Module 6.

DO THIS NOW

Write spend, leads and cost per lead on W5 every week.

Worksheet: W5 Weekly log (Appendix)

Lesson 4.3 — Refresh ads and budget (10 minutes, fortnightly)

After 30 days and 500 impressions, pause any headline rated 'Low' and replace it with a new one from the prompt. Never raise the budget because the interface suggests it; raise it only when cost per lead is under target and 'search impression share lost to budget' is above 30%.

DO THIS NOW

Fortnightly: one asset swap, one budget decision, both logged.

Worksheet: W5 Weekly log (Appendix)

MODULE 4 — YOU ARE DONE WHEN

Four weeks of the routine logged on W5.

Module 5 — How to read an agency report, and how to hire one

If you decide to buy management, this module lets you do it on your terms — with your baseline, your definition and your accounts.

Lesson 5.1 — The seven questions

Before signing: (1) What do you count as a conversion, exactly? (2) Whose account will the campaigns live in? (3) Is ad spend billed by Google to my card, or through you? (4) What is the notice period and what happens to tracking and phone numbers if I leave? (5) What will you report — leads, or conversions? (6) Show me a before/after for a client in my trade with the definition and the period stated. (7) What is the fee, including GST, and is there a setup fee?

A good answer to (1) is your Module 1 definition. A bad answer to (4) is a free setup that stops working when you cancel — that is a switching cost dressed as a gift.

DO THIS NOW

Put the seven questions to any proposal and score it on W6.

Worksheet: W6 Agency check (Appendix)

Lesson 5.2 — Reading the before/after wall

Watch for: conversions with decimals (modelled, not counted); month-on-month lifts from a near-zero baseline; account labels numbered 01, 05, 06 (the missing numbers are the accounts that did not work); ROAS without profit; a 'valued at' setup fee the seller priced themselves; and 'never pay a management fee again' above a management fee.

None of these means dishonesty. All of them mean 'ask'.

DO THIS NOW

Take one real agency page and tick the tells on W6.

Worksheet: W6 Agency check (Appendix)

MODULE 5 — YOU ARE DONE WHEN

A completed W6 against any proposal, and a contract you can leave.

Module 6 — The 90-day decision

At day 90 you have data. Decide with it, once, in writing.

Lesson 6.1 — The three forks

Keep doing it yourself if cost per lead is at or under a third of what a job is worth and the routine takes you under an hour a week. Buy management (using Module 5) if leads are profitable but the routine keeps slipping — pay a fixed fee, keep your accounts, and hold them to your baseline. Stop the channel if, after 90 days and at least A\$3,000 spent with tracking working, cost per lead is above what a job is worth: the problem is the offer or the market, not the ads, and no manager can fix that for A\$299 a month.

Write the decision on W7 and date it. Revisit in 90 days, not in a bad week.

DO THIS NOW

Complete W7. Tell one person your decision so it sticks.

Worksheet: W7 90-day decision (Appendix)

Lesson 6.2 — If you have no budget yet

Google Business Profile complete with photos, services and hours; ask every finished job for a review with a direct link; a website with the suburb and the service in the page title and a phone number that works on mobile. Three free things that will outperform a A\$500-a-month campaign in most suburbs.

DO THIS NOW

Do the three free things this week and write the completion date on W7.

Worksheet: W7 90-day decision (Appendix)

MODULE 6 — YOU ARE DONE WHEN

A dated decision: keep DIY, buy informed, or stop the channel — with the numbers that made it.

Appendix — Worksheets

W1 Baseline

Item	Last 90 days	Notes
Lead definition		
Spend (A\$)		
Clicks		
Conversions as reported		what were they?
Real leads (calls >60s + forms)		
Cost per real lead		spend ÷ leads
Value of one job (A\$)		
Monthly budget / daily budget		

W2 Tracking test

Item	Done	Evidence
Ads / GA4 / Tag Manager account IDs (mine)		
Calls-from-ads conversion, 60s minimum, Primary		
Form thank-you-page conversion, Primary		
Test call placed and recorded in Ads		screenshot
Test form submitted and recorded		screenshot
Call tracking decision		yes/no + why

W3 Structure

Ad group (one service)	Exact-match keywords	Phrase-match keywords	Ad approved (date)

W4 Negative list (starter, service businesses)

Load as campaign negatives in phrase match. Add your own suburbs, products and trades you do not serve.

Category	Terms
Employment	job, jobs, hiring, salary, wage, apprentice, apprenticeship, career, vacancy, recruit, resume
Learning	course, courses, training, certificate, tafe, diploma, how to, tutorial, diy, youtube, guide, pdf
Free / cheap	free, cheapest, discount code, coupon, second hand, used, gumtree, marketplace, wholesale

Category	Terms
Wrong intent	reviews, complaints, salary, definition, meaning, history, wikipedia, forum, reddit
Wrong product	kit, parts, supplies, bunnings, ebay, amazon, rental, hire, manual, warranty claim
Wrong place	(every suburb, town and state you do not service)
Wrong trade	(every adjacent trade you do not do — e.g. for a plumber: electrician, roofer, tiler, gasfitter if not licensed)

W5 Weekly log

Week	Spend	Leads	Cost/lead	Negatives added	Keywords added	Asset swap / budget note
1						
2						
3						
4						
5–13						

W6 Agency check

Question / tell	Answer	Pass?
1 Conversion definition		
2 Whose account		
3 Ad spend billed by Google to me		
4 Notice period; tracking/numbers on exit		
5 Reports leads or conversions		
6 Before/after with definition + period		
7 Fee incl. GST; setup fee		
Tells: decimals / zero baseline / numbering gaps / ROAS not profit / self-priced setup / fee-above-fee		

W7 90-day decision

Item	Value
Date	
Spend over 90 days	
Real leads	
Cost per lead vs value of a job	
Hours per week on the routine	
Decision: keep DIY / buy informed / stop channel	
Reason in one sentence	
Review date (+90 days)	

Honest limits

- Figures (minimum spend, tool prices, thresholds) are September 2026 Australian estimates; check the live pages.
- This course covers Google Search ads for service businesses. E-commerce (Shopping, Performance Max) and Meta ads need different structures.
- An AI assistant reads reports; it does not manage accounts. You remain the approval step.
- Nothing here is legal advice; the Australian Consumer Law applies to your own ads — do not make claims you cannot substantiate.
- If ads are not working after 90 days with tracking in place, the fix is usually the offer, the website or the market, not the campaign.