

◆ Sydney CBD's leading chain of hardware stores has won the **2007 NSW Retailer of the Year Award** - with a 29 year old Managing Director at the helm. **Sunlite City Hardware**, a **Thrifty Link** member, also took the honours as Boutique Retailer of the Year at the Australian Retailers Association Annual Awards Ceremony. Sunlite City is no ordinary chain of hardware stores. The lighting is inviting, the products are outstandingly merchandised, there are huge plasma screens in the window, mannequins, and even multimedia sales displays. Along with 'WOW' customer service and an outstanding submission, this is why Thrifty-Link member Sunlite City Hardware cleaned up at the awards ceremony. In just four years since assuming control of the family business, Managing Director Steven Czeiger has taken Sunlite City Hardware to the enviable position of being the Sydney CBD's most successful hardware business and the secret to his success sits with his 'dream team' and the 'wow' customer service they deliver. He is currently planning the launch of their third hardware store in the Bondi Junction Mall due to open next month. *Thrifty Link, 22 November.*

◆ Grocery retailer and supplier, **Metcash**, will hand out \$100 million in loans to **IGA** retailers to refurbish stores, as part of a new growth strategy that focuses on fresh food. The loans are effectively interest free and Metcash is confident of recovering the investment costs through an anticipated 20 percent increase in sales. The loan program is designed to encourage IGA retailers to refurbish their stores every seven or eight years, instead of every 15 years as previously done. It is an ongoing strategy that will see Metcash relending funds as retailers repay their loan. This refurbishment policy comes at the same time as Metcash establishes a fourth business division, IGA Fresh, as a critical growth move. *IGA, 22 November.*

◆ **Woolworths** has become the country's first retailer to launch a national system to trace shopping trolleys. Called **Trolley Tracker**, the system enlists the support of the public to report abandoned Woolworths and Big W trolleys. This information is then passed directly to one of hundreds of trolley collection teams around the country who will retrieve the trolley and return it to the relevant store. Trolley Tracker is one part of Woolworths' commitment to reduce the company's environmental footprint. *Planet Retail, 1 November.*

◆ Supermarket giants, **Coles and Woolworths**, have this month announced they are upgrading their checkout barcode scanners to **GSI Databar**, ensuring they are compatible with a new standard of barcodes around the world. This new barcode technology will allow the checkout scanners to read and use product-specific information such as use-by dates encrypted into the new barcodes. The only challenge will be integrating the new technology into older point-of-sale (POS) systems, and in some cases these may need replacing. The barcodes will initially be used for fruit, produce and pharmaceuticals with a worldwide standard coming into effect by January 2010. Databar manufacturer Datalogic has negotiated exclusive deals with Coles and Woolworths, and 80 percent coverage across Metcash stores. Metcash are

currently investigating the compliance of their current POS systems. *AFR, 21 November.*

◆ Leading book retailer, **Dymocks**, has introduced digital books into its multi-channel strategy. The online technology mirrors international retailers Wal-Mart, Tesco and Home Depot and allows customers to download up to 120,000 books that have been digitalised at home or in-store using kiosks. Dymocks wants to take on Amazon in online book retailing and believes that the web-based strategy will account for 25 percent of growth over the next five years, currently the retailer accounts for 18 percent of the \$1.2 billion Australian book retailing. Many international publishers have embraced online book retailing and digital books, but Australian publishers are yet to fully adopt digital books. *AFR, 19 November.*

◆ Since the **Reject Shop** went public in 2004, the discount retailer has been growing from strength to strength. It was announced this month that plans to accelerate store openings have been realised this year as 10 more stores have been opened since July this year. Western Australia is proving to be fertile ground for the retailer, as it expands rapidly around the state. The Reject Shop also plans to enter the Tasmanian market by 2008-2009 – this would mean national coverage. The retailer said it feels well positioned going forward; targeted at the budget conscious they will no doubt benefit from any tightening in consumer spending. *AFR, 16 November*

◆ **Woolworths** has welcomed a decision by New Zealand's High Court to overturn a ruling blocking the supermarket and its rival, Foodstuffs, from bidding for **The Warehouse Group**. The rival chains, which already have a 10 percent stake each in The Warehouse, spent two weeks in late October and early November presenting their cases to the court. While Woolworths was tight-lipped about how fast they would move on expanding in New Zealand, chief executive Michael Luscombe has previously outlined plans to grow the company through acquisition. Local markets reacted positively to the news, with shares in both companies climbing. *The Advertiser, 29 November.*

◆ The issue of **retail theft** is always on the agenda, but recent statistics show that the total value of shrinkage in Australia in 2007 rose to \$2.25 billion or 1.39 percent of sales. According to the global study by the Centre for Retail Research this represents a 1.36 percent increase on 2006 figures. Though there are a variety of anti-theft devices for retailers to use, the study highlighted that anti-theft measures are not only costly for retailers to implement, but thieves are finding ways of overcoming news measures by more creative ways such as removing security tags and foil-lining shopping bags as a way of desensitising security gates. With new prevention measures having an average life span of only 12 months before they are circumvented, the 0.35 percent of sales (\$575 million) spent on anti-theft devices, may be better spent on other areas. Australian retailers attribute 40.2 percent of shrink to staff and 36.6 to customers. *AFR, 16 November.*