

Retail thriving in Hunter

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BIG retail business in the Hunter is bucking the online trend and the Kotara Homemaker Centre is leading the way.

Statistics released yesterday by PricewaterhouseCoopers and Frost & Sullivan revealed Australians would spend \$13.6 billion online in 2011, \$6 billion of which

Kotara Homemaker Centre in vanguard of trend

would go overseas.

Most online traffic involves books, music, clothing and smaller retail items but there is an increasing trend to buy whitegoods and homeware products on the internet.

Darren Holland from BB Retail Capital, which designed, developed and

owns the Kotara Homemaker Centre, said that was not the case in the Hunter.

"We have 100 per cent occupancy and we had that three months before the second stage of the development was completed," Mr Holland said.

"It is our understanding all of the retailers in stage two,

and stage one for that matter, are trading very strongly.

"The traffic count in both sections of the development is increasing and Kotara is certainly our largest and landmark trophy centre."

BB Retail Capital owns seven homemaker centres, the most recent addition was

the \$49 million Homeworks Caringbah, and Kotara is the largest with 55 stores and 57,000 square metres of floor space.

Kotara won an Urban Taskforce Australia award for development excellence that included design, success of the leasing, community bene-

fits and the complexity of the stage two development.

"The award was well received because we went through a lot to get the development done," Mr Holland said.

"Now we've got full occupancy and Dan Murphy's opening in October and Mountain Designs [are] opening as well so we are seeing the strength of the Newcastle market."

Fortescue dismisses royalties to Aborigines

FORTESCUE Metals Group's new chief executive, Neville Power, has firmly ruled out a royalty deal with Aboriginal landowners for its planned Solomon mine in Western Australia.

The Solomon project, which contains hundreds of billions of dollars worth of iron ore, lies about 200 kilometres south of Roebourne in Yindjibarndi country, where the community is divided over a deal offered by Fortescue to mine their land.



Win for iron ore workers

A LANDMARK victory in the Federal Court looks set to give unions more power to bargain on behalf of workers at Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton iron ore operations in the Pilbara.

A full bench of the court has ruled that a non-union collective agreement covering workers in Rio Tinto's operations was invalid.

Monday's decision casts doubt on similar agreements at BHP and other operations in the mining region,