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\$2 INCLUDING GST

People are planning to spend less wherever they can: retailers

## Mums forced back to work

By MATTHEW BENNS

RISING interest rates mean that families are cutting back on spending – and it is the women who are bearing the brunt of the financial pain.

Two new surveys show women are making the biggest sacrifices by axing gym memberships and luxuries such as massages and facials. And to help make ends meet, many mothers are returning to the workforce.

Employment agency Nine2Three, which finds work for mothers during school hours, has had a 300 per cent increase in women seeking work in the past year alone.

"The recent interest rate rises have seen a rapid decline in many women's quality of life," Gillian Franklin, managing director of womens' marketing company Heat Group, said.

The company surveyed 600 women to find that many were making sacrifices.

Ms Franklin said 41.7 per cent of respondents had cut their spending on health-related activities such as going to the gym, yoga classes and buying health foods. "Additionally, 66 per cent of women are putting those things they do for relaxation

and time out, like facials, waxing, haircuts and other pampering treatments, on the back-burner." Close to 70 per cent have cut back on going out.

A survey of 1000 people conducted by the Australian National Retailers Association found seven out of 10 households were cutting spending on holidays, entertaining and non-essential items.

"People are planning to spend less wherever they can," association chief executive Margy Osmond said.

Nine2Three managing director Kathryn MacMillan said that, since interest rates started to rise, a massive influx of women had approached her agency looking for work.

"Anecdotally they say they are returning to the workforce to help the family budget because of the rising interest rates and fuel costs," she said.

Social commentator David Chalke, director of market researcher AustraliaSCAN, predicts garage sales and lottery ticket purchases will increase, and women will urge male partners to get rid of their expensive "toys".

"I'm under scrutiny at the moment to sell my 1962 Mini," Mr Chalke said.



Doing it tough ... (from left) Samantha, Madison, Jodi and Ashleigh Dean at home.

Photo: Helen Nezdropa

## Cost of living a struggle on one wage

MOTHER-OF-THREE Jodi Dean was forced back to work as interest rates and fuel prices bit into the household budget.

"We were living on one wage and the increasing interest rates and rising price of fuel meant we were struggling to pay the bills," Mrs Dean, from Barden Ridge, said.

She found work as an office

assistant through Sutherland employment agency Nine2Three, which helps mothers find work during school hours.

She also had to cut costs to help the family survive on her husband Stuart's wage as a machine operator.

"I was a member of a gym but I could not afford the monthly fee.

I chose to go back to work instead so that my children could still do their activities," she said.

Daughters Samantha, 11, Madison, 8, and Ashleigh, 4, do weekly dance and swimming lessons.

"We don't go out to restaurants or have takeaways any more," Mrs Dean said.