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Aussies to spend \$2.5 billion as students head Back to School

As students gear up to return to their classrooms, Australia's Back to School (BTS) purchases are set to generate \$2.5 billion in sales.

Inaugural research by the Australian Retailers Association (ARA), in partnership with Roy Morgan, reveals approximately 5 million Australians (24%) will spend an average of \$512 each on BTS related merchandise.

Of those surveyed, 44% of Australians making BTS purchases said they would be spending more than last year, while 22% said they would spend the same and 34% said they would be spending less.

The key findings of the ARA-Roy Morgan Research include:

- Of those participating in the sales, 61% are making purchases for primary school, 47% for high school, and 13% for university or TAFE. (Participants could select multiple options).
- The 35–49-year-old age bracket are set to make up the lion's share of BTS spending, making up \$1.6 billion of the \$2.5 billion overall spend.
- Around 14% of those participating in the sales plan to spend more than \$1,000, while 10% plan on spending less than \$100.
- Men (\$1.26 billion) and women (\$1.28 billion) are tipped to spend close to the same amount.
- The most popular purchases will be stationary (mentioned by 54% of respondents), school uniforms (51%), footwear (50%), books (37%) and lunchboxes or water bottles (26%).

ARA CEO Paul Zahra said the projected BTS purchases appeared strong as retailers look to build momentum to begin the year.

"Back to School sales are important for retailers to build momentum after the Boxing Day period and springboard into the year ahead," he said.

"The Back to School period is where we see retail trade ramp back up, as many Australians return from their holidays and prepare their kids for the school year.

"Typically, uniforms, stationery, books and shoes make up most of the spending, with tech, school bags, lunch boxes and water bottles also highly sought after.

"With high interest rates and tighter budgets, parents will be expecting better value than ever before."

Mr Zahra acknowledged it is a challenging time for some families, who are struggling to afford supplies.

"With the cost-of-living crunch, it's very tough out there for a lot of families – especially when it comes to purchasing back to school items for their children.

"These aren't just items on a shopping list – they're essentials that can make a real difference in a child's life.

"Many schools provide exemptions and financial support for those experiencing financial hardship – while some State Governments have their own programs to assist."

The ARA-Roy Morgan Snap SMS survey was conducted with an Australian-wide cross-section of 4,816 Australians aged 18+ on Monday January 8 - Friday January 12, 2024.

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The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) is the oldest, largest and most diverse national retail body, representing a \$400 billion sector that employs 1.3 million Australians and is the largest private sector employer in the country. As Australia's peak retail body, representing more than 120,000 retail shop fronts and online stores, the ARA informs, advocates, educates, protects and unifies our independent, national and international retail community. To learn more about ARA's exclusive member benefits and more, visit retail.org.au

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