

Herald Sun

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Checkout meltdown in Christmas lead-up

- **by: Alex White**
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EFPOS chaos led to shoppers abandoning their trolleys yesterday.

Source: The Advertiser

EFTPOS chaos led to shoppers abandoning their trolleys yesterday, delivering another blow to the already struggling retail sector in the lead-up to Christmas.

Shoppers at Big W, Dan Murphy's, Woolworths and Caltex were affected by the system failure at 2.30pm, which meant goods could be bought only with cash.

Shoppers took to Twitter to vent their frustration and reported leaving the stores with no eftpos in droves.

"Spent ages lining up to get drinks at Dan Murphy's, eftpos down, told to go get cash and come back wait 30 mins to get our drinks," Toni Lou tweeted.

Other tweets described the debacle as a Christmas retail fail.

A Woolworths spokesman said a back-up system had been activated in less than an hour after the failure was reported.

The crisis struck on the first weekend of the Christmas sale season and only days after Woolworths chief Grant O'Brien declared weak conditions were buffeting Australia's retail sector.

National Retail Association executive director Gary Black said it was a bad blow for the sector.

But he said turnouts had improved this year and he hoped spending would ramp up in the final three weeks leading to Christmas.

"The feedback is we are seeing modest signs of improvement, which we expected," Mr Black said. "We are getting signs of some improvement for clothing, footwear, jewellery and electrical goods -- which have been in free-fall since 2008."

Mr Black said the November interest rate cut would lead to families spending more and he hoped for another rate cut this week to bring retailers some Christmas cheer.

Myer has predicted a Christmas bounce, with sales of toys, cosmetics, fragrances, gift packs, hampers and decorations on the rise.

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