



# Shoppers don't do themselves credit

## Matt Sun

More than two-thirds of city workers had not been able to significantly reduce personal debt in the past three months, a survey found.

A Newspoll survey commissioned by debt relief company Fox Symes also found that 14 per cent said debts were worse.

The survey of 1200 Austral-

ians found 20 per cent said the ability to pay had worsened.

It comes after the Reserve Bank revealed Australia's credit card bill reached \$37 billion in August – or \$2821 per card.

Australians charged \$16.46 billion to 13 million credit cards during that month while repayments totalled \$16.68 billion.

Cash advances from credit cards fell by 4.4 per cent.

But the \$20 billion owed at

the start of the month was only slightly reduced.

Debt relief expert Deborah Southon said almost a third of people increased debt after buying a new car or signing up for a new subscription service.

A growing number of people admitted to buying essential items on credit because they had no cash.

"The fact that Australians are listing cost-of-living items, like groceries, as a reason for falling

into debt, should sound alarm bells in households across the country," Southon said.

Workers should spend five minutes of their train trip home to keep a spending diary.

"Reflect on the train what you have spent that day and keep a diary for a week or month, people might be surprised about the unexpected costs," Southon said.

Shoppers should not rely on credit to buy Christmas gifts.