

wrong word but there is a lot of use of concrete and raw steel. It's got quite a masculine, modern feel to it whereas the old stores have a lot of maple and are a bit more toned down.

"We've taken on an aggressive refurbishment program to bring the key stores back into line with the new model," he said.

"The program is hard to quantify in dollar terms. It depends on how well the board approval goes each time we submit a store for refurbishment... but it is a significant program."

Whiting said six stores would be completed this side of Christmas and a similar amount for the next half - "so we're looking at 15 stores initially and then we'll assess things from there".

"The new store in Sylvia Park has performed fantastically well for us. I understand the whole Sylvia Park centre is trading very well. It's quite a good mix in that it's not the same old retailers. There are quite a few new brands trading there which has improved the mix on the fashion side.

"We put in a relatively big format store of 300 plus square metres which is big for a specialty menswear site but its been going very well for us," Whiting said.

He said Hallenstein catered for men and boys with a buying strategy focused on reflecting both current and emerging overseas fashion trends.

"In our small youth range, we start at around age 12 to 14, and the rest of the business is menswear catering for the 20 to 30 age group.

"Glassons is purely womenswear and its core target market is younger - 16 to 25 years," Whiting said on the eve of his departure to run Glasson. He starts as GM on November 1.

Hallenstein Glassons' net profit for the year to August 1 fell 1.3% to \$21.4 million. Revenue rose 1.7% to \$200.2 million and the operating profit fell 0.5% to \$32.3 million.

Chairman Warren Bell said trading for the first five weeks had been slightly ahead of the previous year and trading margins remained satisfactory.

Bell said the New Zealand market was challenging, with rising interest costs finally beginning to dampen consumer spending.

In Australia, where Glasson has been opening stores for a couple of years, a more robust economy had provided a more resilient trading environment, with sales increasing 8.1%, he said.

Bell said there was a total of 25 Glasson stores in Australia, the newest being located at Kotara in Newcastle. Further sites in Australia were under consideration, he said. **IRW**

Robins rolls out new POS systems

Robins Kitchen, the Queensland based kitchenware retailer, is rolling out a new point of sale system and head office IT package to the chain's 23 stores this month.

Shane Hicks, Robins Kitchen GM, said the system developed by Melbourne company, Retail Directions, will also provide the chain with a new retail support centre inventory management system.

"Although there is never a good time to do this, our existing system was slowing us down and not giving all the information required," Hicks said.

After an extensive review program, the company has decided to run with the Retail Directions store POS and HO package that will give us many benefits, including the ability to run 100 plus stores with no further upgrade."

Hicks said a whole new IT system represent a big investment for the company but recent growth required a more user-friendly and faster system that also provided better management information at store and head office level.

"On a comparable store basis, our business has increased sales by more than 20% this calendar year and we are now looking at investing more time and capital into some longer term projects that will maximise results in the existing business and build a solid foundation for planned growth in both existing and new stores."

Hicks said the IT system was considered important to support Robins Kitchen to focus on getting the right stock, in the right stores, at the right time.

"While we have already made significant progress in this area by reducing our out of stocks, increasing stock turn and simultaneously reducing overall inventory levels, our existing system has made this process extremely challenging. We expect to make significant leaps forward in this area in the immediate period ahead."

Hicks said as soon as the IT system is bedded in, Robins Kitchen starts another significant investment for the brand which is a strategic state wide Christmas TV campaign.

"Working closely with both our agency, and key suppliers, we have developed a campaign that is designed to build the longer term awareness of the brand as "the kitchenware destination.

"At the same time, we are making sure that Robins Kitchen is top of mind for great kitchenware-related gifts this Christmas.

"We expect the campaign to have excellent cut-through, while also making sure people know that we are committed to inspiring great home cooking.

"It's an exciting time for the business and we are all very focused at the moment and the team is busy executing the brand plan. We believe the considerable investment in IT and media will help us keep the momentum going," Hicks said. **IRW**

Chain aims to ensure right stock in right store at right time