

Online trading boom sweeps Canterbury - The Press, Saturday, 17 May 2008

Online trading is booming in Canterbury as people sell items to help deflect soaring living costs.

Figures from the Trade Me website show Canterbury sells more items than any other region.

Last month, items worth more than \$10 million were sold by Cantabrians on Trade Me, and 25 per cent of the items listed resulted in a sale.

Auckland and Wellington had sell rates of 21 per cent and 18 per cent respectively.

Trade Me spokesman Mike O'Donnell said Canterbury people made up 13 per cent of the total number registered on the site.

"I think as economic conditions tighten, people are using Trade Me to bring in some extra income and get liquidity in some of their assets," he said.

The main selling categories on the website - home and living, baby products, and building and renovation - were "classic" examples.

"If you have a baby, once they reach two or three you no longer need all those things like prams and toys. The same with building work," O'Donnell said.

"It is good to be able to flick it on and get a couple of hundred dollars for it."

The South Island was a "late starter" in online trading and the recent activity represented a "catch-up" with the rest of the country.

Aside from items for sale, the number of jobs being advertised had increased over 40% from the start of the year.

"I think as things tighten up, businesses are looking for more cost-efficient ways to find people," O'Donnell said.

He said the true worth of items sold on Trade Me was more than \$10m as car and house sales were confidential and were not included in the figure.

Keen e-trader Greg Sugrue, 33, said: "On some of the stuff, I am definitely making a profit. I think when you are shopping online you are focused on what you want and you don't end up spending more money because you don't get distracted by offers."

Surgrue, a sales representative, is buying equipment for renovations at his Linwood home while selling items such as old cellphones and computer game consoles.

"The most items I have ever had listed is 30. All you need is a digital camera and an internet connection and you are up and running," he said.

New Zealand Federation of Family Budgeting Services chief executive Raewyn Fox said it could be useful for people with money troubles to sell unwanted items.

"We do have a conversation with people and say, 'What are your options?' One of the things we do discuss is whether people have anything they could sell," she said.

"From what people tell me, you do tend to get a better price (on Trade Me) because of the competition in the auction."

Christchurch City Missioner Michael Gorman said "it made sense" for people to sell assets they could afford to do without to prepare for a tough winter.

"We try to encourage people to use their initiative and help themselves and if they see that as a way of doing it, we wouldn't interfere one way or another," he said.

Gorman said Christchurch people were getting worried about the prospect of a hard winter.

"The anxiety levels are really high. People see the prices are going up and they are scared and a little bit depressed by what's going to happen," he said.