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Media Release.

Wednesday 14 November 2007

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Top Retailers Honoured at the Australian Retailers Association Annual Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner

Tuesday 13 November – Last night, over 400 guests converged at Doltone House to celebrate and honour top achievers across NSW's retail industry. With an invitation to Immerse Yourself in Retail, guests were greeted with an underwater world, reflecting the diverse and colourful individuals that make up this vital industry sector.

The Retail Awards gala dinner was hosted by Temptation's Ed Phillips and Channel 9's Andi Lew, with an amazing Aerial Act and high energy performance by local band Planet Groove. It was a spectacular event that brought retailers together to celebrate, network and dance the night away. More than 40 finalists across 10 award categories competed for the nation's most prestigious industry awards.

The ARA Retail Awards Program and Gala Dinner was made possible by the generous contributions of major sponsors; Colonial First State Property Management, Shopping Centre Council of Australia, Allianz, TAFE NSW, Australian Business Limited, Shop Distributed and Allied Employee Association.

National Marketing Director Mr. Richard Vines commended all finalists in this year's awards. "The 2007 finalists were highly impressive and they are all winners in their own right. New South Wales should be immensely proud of the quality and talent of our retailers who not only contribute to the wealth of our economy, but indeed make shopping and exciting activity. Mr Vines said. "The Association plays an important role in supporting and building the retail sector and the awards program plays a big part in raising industry standards."

ARA 2007 Young Retailer of the Year

A committed and highly focused individual who confidently makes planning decisions based on company objectives and market needs, has earned Sydney -based Andrew Morley title of ARA 2007 Young Retailer of the Year.

Mr Morley received the prestigious prize last night from the Executive Director of ARA, Mr Richard Evans, as part of the Australian Retailers Association 2007 Awards presentation held at Doltone House. Mr Evans said Mr Morley, a merchandise planner at the Best & Less Head Office in Leichhardt, had impressed the judging panel with his personable manner, leadership skills and professionalism.

"Andrew Morley embodies what it means to forge a rewarding, diverse and challenging career in retail," Mr Evans said. "With a passion for the dynamic nature and constant change of retail, Andrew is a tremendous ambassador for an industry that is one of New South Wales' largest employer of young people."

Mr Morley also received the Young Retailer of the Year Corporate Business category. The Regional Business Award was presented to Kristie Bartlett of The Reject Shop, while Jenny Wong of Louis Vuitton in CBD, Sydney took out the Small/Medium category. Melinda Byrnes of Fantastic Furniture received the Large Business Award.

ARA 2007 SDA Trainee of the Year

Jaida Turnbull of Best & Less was awarded the ARA 2007 Trainee of the Year Award. Jaida's commitment to further her career through training and her willingness to learn and embrace new challenges was inspiring.

ARA 2007 Australian Business Limited Staff Development Business Training Award

Louis Vuitton Australia, are committed to developing innovative training strategies to provide every opportunity for staff to achieve their personal best, by injecting their training with passion and inspiration, they were awarded the ARA 2007 Staff Development Business Training Award.

ARA 2007 Colonial First State Property Management Retailer of the Year

Sunlite City Hardware, renowned for its fast, friendly and knowledgeable service, was named ARA 2007 Colonial First State Property Management Retailer of the Year.

Today's retailer has a strong desire to stand out and fight for the consumer dollar. With a focus on lifestyle, experience, ambience and careful product selection, retailing is more exciting than it has ever been.

George Karabatsos, Head of Retail Operations at Colonial First State Property Management believes these awards are essential. "Retailers are an integral part of our economy and we should all share a stake in the pursuit of retail excellence and the success it delivers". Mr Karabatsos said. Colonial First State Property Management are one of the major sponsors supporting the ARA Awards.

Sunlite City Hardware also received Boutique Retailer of the Year. Crabtree & Evelyn received Retail Brand of the Year. Retail Store of the Year was awarded to Pumpkin Patch. Barry Hill from Maitland New South Wales was awarded Retail Franchisee of the Year.

The prestigious NSW President's Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement and contribution to the Retail Industry was awarded to Stephen Heath, CEO of Rebel Australia.

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