



Loyalty flying by

DAVID NANKERVIS

TENS of millions of dollars worth of freebies are being squandered by loyalty scheme members who are failing to redeem reward points.

New research has revealed an estimated 1.4 million South Australians are members of loyalty programs – run by airlines, supermarkets, major retailers and coffee shops – but less than a third regularly redeem their rewards.

The typical family with membership of the standard loyalty reward schemes (including Woolworths Everyday Rewards, McDonalds and Qantas Frequent Flyer) can save about \$4100 a year by redeeming the rewards they have accumulated, according to new loyalty program information website Perkler.com.

But a national survey by the website found more than half the people enrolled in loyalty

schemes only cashed in an average of \$100 worth of rewards each year.

“It is quite scary to see just how little we make of the free discounts and rewards we can claim through shopping at different retailers,” said Perkler founder Justin Barrie.

“I think often people are unaware of what they’re actually entitled to. You don’t have to always clock up points, some retailers offer cash back or products on the spot.”

Mr Barrie estimated South Australians failed to collect up to \$20 million worth of benefits each year.

“In today’s financial climate, you would think most Aussies would be trying to cut costs and save dollars wherever they could,” he said.

The survey also found: **SUPERMARKET** and retailer loyalty programs were the most popular with 75 per cent

of adults registered with at least one program.

ONLY 5 per cent of members are claiming more than \$500 each year through their loyalty programs.

68 PER CENT of people redeem more points now as a result of the economic downturn.

49 PER CENT of respondents claimed free coffee and meals from local loyalty programs.

Perkler.com co-founder Dan Bisa said the best way to maximise a loyalty scheme was to follow these simple tips:

PICK your favourite five to 10 brands, take up their loyalty offers and shop there regularly.

REMEMBER to show your card every time you make a purchase.

BE aware of any special offers and bonus points promotions.

USE a credit card with a re-

ward scheme and make purchases with it as often as possible (but pay the full balance when due) to maximise points.

Consumer group Choice said the survey figures were not surprising.

“Any company which starts up a loyalty scheme does so knowing they don’t have to budget for everything people could possibly claim,” Choice spokesman Christopher Zinn said this week.

“That’s because people can find it hard to redeem the rewards – like frequent flyer points – or the scheme has a time limit that people don’t adhere to.”

Mr Zinn said many schemes charged a fee and consumers should investigate if the rewards were worth the cost.





CHRISTINE'S 15 YEARS OF POINTS ADD UP TO GOALS



SAVINGS: Christine Coombe. **Picture:** Dean Martin

MOTHER of three Christine Coombe spends every Sunday night scouring the Coles supermarket brochure looking for items offering bonus Fly Buy points.

It's a habit she estimates has saved more than \$2500 off the family grocery bill since she joined the scheme when it was launched 15 years ago.

"I joined up straight away to save money because points could be earned at the stores we were already regularly using and I always look for bonus point items to maximise savings," the St Marys resident said.

"Three years ago I bought 22 tubes of toothpaste because it got me over the \$100 to spend on health and beauty products necessary to earn a bonus 2500 points - we used the last tube just two months ago."

When the family grew to five, so did the weekly grocery bill and at one stage Ms Coombe said she was redeeming one \$100 voucher on grocery purchases every three months.