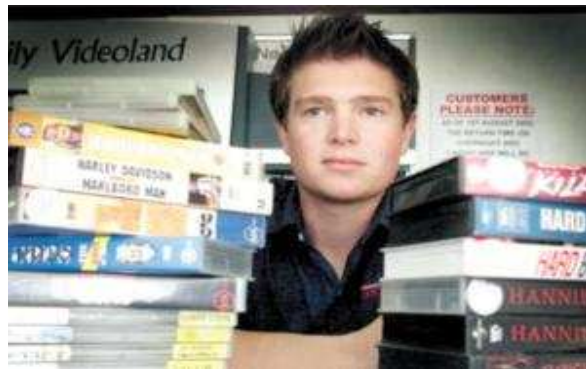


The Border Mail

Sat, 8th April, 2006

6500 people banned Border video hire shops owed \$300,000

BY BRAD WORRALL



Mitch Linolli at Network Video Lavington where bad debts hit more than \$12,000. Picture RAY HUNT

MORE than \$300,000 is owed to Border video stores in late fees and unreturned rentals. It has resulted in almost 6500 people in Wodonga, Albury and Lavington being put on a list of defaulters that bars them from video-store membership.

And statistics say about 5000 of them will be men aged 18 to 25.

Video Defaulters' Andrew Wall said 14 stores on the Border were now using the register to ban customers from hiring movies.

"Our records show that customers still owe \$153,262 but you could double this amount if you take into account people who owe \$20 or less," he said.

"We only list defaulters who owe more than \$30.

"Initially we had 6427 people on the list but our debt collection service has cut that back to 2616."

Owner of Network Video Lavington, formerly Family Videoland, Amanda Duncan-Strelec said it had enlisted the help of Video Defaulters a year ago.

"We found that we were owed \$12,000 after just 18 months," she said.

"In a business where the average transaction is between \$10 and \$20 that's a lot of money.

"In the first month, they were able to recover more than \$4000 of that bad debt.

"Most video stores would say that unpaid fees are their biggest concern.

"Whatever the reasons or excuses offered by the customers who owe the money, they need to understand it is just a small, generally family business that suffers."

Mr Wall said it was easy to get your name off the default registry.

"All one has to do is pay your local video store what is owed," he said.

"In the past people have been able to switch to another video store rather than pay the debt ... with our system that is no longer possible."

Customers on the registry are refused membership.