



Pricy shades point to future

Emily Power

MELBOURNE'S most expensive sunglasses are the flashy centrepiece of a new superstore tipped to be the future of shopping.

Two pairs of the gold and diamond Bulgari sunnies, worth \$18,000 each, more than a small car, are available only in Australia.

The posh peepers are part of an affordable and high-end offering at a new optical store, the largest in the southern hemisphere, aiming to attract shoppers with high-tech tools and VIP treatment.

Bleak sales growth figures show retail spending in Victoria is down on last year, forcing traders to invent cutting-edge concepts to draw customers in the current cutthroat retail environment.

OPSM decided to open the enormous Eye Hub store in Hawthorn ahead of other world shopping capitals.

Digital mirrors play back video of customers so they can see their sunnies at every angle.

A French concierge is on hand, and special clients can sip champagne while trying on frames with the help of a stylist.

Futurologist Dr Ian Pearson said VIP experience shopping,



Seeing is believing: a model wears the \$18,000 sunglasses. Picture: ALEX COPPEL

rich in technology, was the future of retail.

"You have to keep up, you can't ever relax with these concepts," he said.

"It has to be a bespoke experience — you are not the same as other people walking

in the front door. What is happening in retail is the care economy . . . it comes back to that human edge."

Melinda Spencer, spokeswoman for OPSM's parent company Luxottica, said in international

business circles Australia is seen as "a gymnasium to try new things".

"The open-mindedness to fashion is Melbourne was one of the factors in choosing Melbourne as the place to come," she said.