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Case Study



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Agencies
Hypetap + BIG W

Client
BIG W

Title
How flipping the script from 'supermodel' to 'supermum' enabled BIG W to drive profitable growth through its womenswear influencer marketing

Category
A01. Retail

Author
Shane Holmes
Managing Partner
Hypetap

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Question One: Executive Summary

When it comes to womenswear and department stores - the playbook has been written for decades.

Pick a supermodel. Put her face on a billboard, launch a press event and run a price ticket underneath.
Jen Hawkins.
Elyse Knowles.
Miranda Kerr.
The script never varied... Until BIG W decided to flip it.

Facing a category where it was seen to be 'behind the trends' and where Kmart's virality had almost become prophetic, instead of buying credibility through fame; we made a simple, but almost counterintuitive choice - we would partner with the women we were actually designing for.

We chose relatable and inspirational over unattainable; mum over supermodel and social first over the traditional playbook.

By making Jules Robinson our modern ambassador with a difference, we saw positive sentiment and social share of voice increase; [redacted], increases in price sensitivity and critical brand perceptions - all with a gross profit return of $3.71 for every $1 spent.

This isn't just a case for celebrity endorsement - it's a case for a new model of ambassador built around an ecosystem of influence and shared values; over fame.



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Question Two: What was the strategic communications problem?

An Australian staple, under pressure.

BIG W has been a fixture of the Australian retail and department store landscape since the first store opened in Newcastle in 1964. With 179 stores nationwide and over 18,000 employees; it has become a leading family destination and a critical commercial brand within the Woolworths Group.

But as the brand entered its 60th year of operation in 2024-25, it faced a number of brand, cultural and category challenges, putting its place as a leader in the retail landscape under pressure.

Challenge #1 - Commercial strain and margin pressure.

FY25 was a challenging year for the brand, posting a $35m loss following a year of $14m positive growth - a -$49m YOY result. Within this result, sales overall had fallen by 0.8% overall, driven by a softer first half of the year. *[SOURCE ONE]*

On top of the loss; margin was eroding; with a shift in strategy in apparel to lower-price ranges and soft sales leading to higher discounting activity and subsequently lower gross margin across major categories such as womenswear. *[SOURCE TWO]*

Momentum in apparel had halted and the brand was facing significant brand and category threats to return to growth.

Challenge #2 - BIG W were struggling to get into the cultural conversation.

Australia's discount department store category is highly concentrated - with Kmart, Target, BIG W and Spotlight accounting for more than 70% of the industry revenue. *[SOURCE THREE]*

But when it comes to share of mind and cultural capital; the narrative has been consistently captured by one player - Kmart. It was a brand continually in the headlines and in organic social media feeds for their value, style (and dupes) and 'sold out' mentality.

From $25 wide-leg jeans to the 'viral denim bomber'; Kmart's youth-led, trend-led womenswear strategy was generating a viral culture that BIG W couldn't match - with a social media share of voice 224% higher than BIG W. *[SOURCE FOUR]*

Kmart became the affordable fashion brand that Australian women shared with each constantly as a badge of pride (and to induce FOMO!).

Challenge #3 - The brand gap between Kmart and BIG W getting bigger.

The consistency of the brand's cultural relevance and defined youth-led, social-led approach that flowed into their apparel design *[SOURCE FIVE]* was creating a deeper wedge in brand consideration and appeal amongst our target audience - Australian women aged 25-55.

By the start of July 2025 - Kmart had a brand consideration gap of 32.6% *[SOURCE SIX]*, double the brand preference and a 24.4% gap in value perceptions. *[SOURCE SEVEN]*

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Challenge #4 - Occupying the place of a 'staple' in apparel, not a destination.

It was clear it wasn't just a sales issue; it was brand reappraisal. Quantitative research demonstrated our core audience viewed BIG W as a dependable source for basics, but saw Kmart as the trendier option. *[SOURCE EIGHT]*

The truth is, they just didn't expect much from us.
Affordable, but behind the trends; a bit daggy and outdated. A place to buy the school uniforms; not the place to find something you'd actually wear out.

This perception gap had real commercial consequences. Australian mothers make 79% of household fashion decisions, and over six million Australian mums collectively drive more than 80% of household spending *[SOURCE NINE]*. Losing her in womenswear means more than losing womenswear revenue — it means losing the trip that carries kids' clothes, homewares, beauty and the toy aisle along with it.

We needed to shift these perceptions.

Challenge #5 - The retail playbook had been rewritten by the audience themselves.

It wasn't just a commercial, cultural or competitive challenge; it was also structural. The very behaviours that define how BIG W reached this audience for the last 60 years - broadcast, glossy and scaled media - had been disrupted.

Australian women aged 25-54 were the most digitally saturated audience in Australia - and the single biggest cohort on Meta. Across Instagram and TikTok, she spent an average of an hour a day inside a feed designed to surface peer-validated and relatable content. *[SOURCE TEN]*

We're not going to tell you that broadcast wouldn't work; because it can have a massive impact. But with traditional channels becoming more costly and premiumised; we needed a mix that could get straight to the source, quickly and with laser-guided relevance.

And her social feed had quickly become more than a media channel; it had become a shopping channel. It was the primary channel for learning about a brand or product for 34% of our audience and 85% were using it to research before buying - with 59% more likely to trust an influencer endorsement over a traditional A-List celeb endorsement. *[SOURCE ELEVEN]*

Our approach would be defined by a small budget, but would need to find a way of showing up in her feed that felt genuinely native - meeting her in the place where the perception problem had actually been formed.

The key challenge to solve:
To help BIG W return to commercial growth in FY26; we needed to drive new growth and momentum in womenswear - reframing perceptions from 'affordable, but daggy' to a credible destination for real, stylish and modern Australian women. This would mean closing the cultural and brand gap with Kmart off the fraction of the budget and defining a new retail playbook for this audience whilst we do it.

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Footnotes
[SOURCE ONE]: Woolworths Group Annual Report; FY25; Ragtrader analysis.
[SOURCE TWO]: Woolworths Group Annual Report; margin analysis.
[SOURCE THREE]: IBIS World Report 2025 - Aus Discount Dept Stores.
[SOURCE FOUR]: Hypetap Intelligence Social Share of Voice analysis - dept stores 2025.
[SOURCE FIVE]: Ragtrader - Interview with Womenswear buyer Cat Wringe 2026.
[SOURCE SIX]: Brand Tracking - Tracksuit; BIG W & Department Stores 2025-26.
[SOURCE SEVEN]: Internal BIG W brand tracking data.
[SOURCE EIGHT]: Hypetap Intelligence quantitative research and strategy development.
[SOURCE NINE]: Australian Mums today 2025 Report + Finder - Household spending stats 2026.
[SOURCE TEN]: Sprout Social - Social Media Demographics 2026.
[SOURCE ELEVEN]: Meltwater Social - Social Media Statistics 2026.

Question Three: What were your objectives?

Our overarching objective was simple - to drive growth and brand reappraisal in an ultra competitive womenswear landscape amongst a critical demographic (Australian women aged 25-55); leveraging social media to give us our biggest bang for buck. We broke it down to specific commercial, brand and communications objectives:

Commercial objective: Drive incremental revenue and margin uplift across womenswear.

We would measure it through three key performance indicators.

a. **Deliver 5% uplift above expected baseline sales revenue from campaign activity.**
As a general trend, womenswear has been in slow YOY decline across department stores from 2020-2025 - - 1.7% per year *[SOURCE TWELVE]*. This would be a reversal of the trend.

b. **Protect profit margin - keep the average selling price of featured products in line with the total range.**
We wanted as many sales at full price as possible; rather than the erosion of margins that had been occurring.

c. **Return on Investment: Deliver a positive incremental gross profit return on investment against marketing spend and activities.**
This would be a marker of efficiency and strategic targeting across our GTM plans.

Brand Objectives: Contribute to positive brand health and solving broader perceptual issues across our target audience.

Our campaign activity wouldn't be the only element at play - there would be broader brand messaging in the market throughout - but we need to contribute in a targeted way. We would measure the following:

d. **Closing the gap on brand consideration.**
Pre-campaign it was sitting at 49% to Kmart's 66% amongst our target audience *[SOURCE THIRTEEN]*. We wanted to close the gap.

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e. **Drive brand engagement in social above industry benchmarks.**
We wanted any content created to be meaningful; so we aimed to drive average social engagement across platforms - using engagement/reach with 1.1% as an industry benchmark. *[SOURCE FOURTEEN]*

Communications Objectives: Own more than our fair share of the attention on social channels.

f. **Maintain our social share of voice position (3rd)** without dramatically increasing our posting frequency..

g. **Maintain leadership in positive social sentiment** - being #1 and remaining above 90% (Kmart sat at 89.7%) throughout the campaign period. *[SOURCE FIFTEEN]*

Our 'in-campaign' activity would be from August 10th 2025 - March 31st 2026. All pre-campaign measures referenced are from July 2025 unless otherwise noted.

Footnotes
[SOURCE TWELVE]: IBIS World Report 2025 - Aus Discount Dept Stores.
[SOURCE THIRTEEN]: Tracksuit Brand Tracking 2025-2026.
[SOURCE FOURTEEN]: Hootsuite social benchmarks.
[SOURCE FIFTEEN]: Hypetap Intelligence Social Listening.

Question Four: What was your strategy and how did you get there?

With a reappraisal problem, a clear competitive deficit to Kmart across our brand health, spend and cultural relevance - the obvious move would have been to borrow from the traditional playbook of ambassadors to shout our way to relevance and attention - force perceptional shift through the volume over quality.

But that would...

1. Require scale that we couldn't afford. The SOV deficit was over 200% and that would be an expensive gap to solve.
2. Our cultural problem wasn't that we were unknown; it was that we were uncool. A famous endorsement would have simply endorsed an old model of retail at the exact moment that Australian women had stopped trusting or believing.
3. The perception gap was formed in social; it needed to be solved in that sphere of influence and play by the medium's rules.

Our audience insight pointed elsewhere...

The audience didn't need to be sold to by someone who looked like a fashion campaign - they needed to feel BIG W's relevance in a world that looked familiar and relevant to their own.

And the shift in trust supported this - 59% of Australian consumers now trusted a sponsored influencer post over an A-list celebrity endorsement *[SOURCE SIXTEEN]*. Qualitative research with Australian mums specifically were making purchase decisions through trusted personalities in their feeds, not through aspirational fashion editorials in their letterboxes. The currency of fashion credibility had moved - from polish to proximity, from aspiration to authenticity, from *"I want to be her"* to *"she's like me." [SOURCE SEVENTEEN]*

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Our job wasn't to find another 'face'; it was to find a true partner BIG W could build a true ecosystem of influence around. One that could integrate BIG W into their normal, yet aspirational lifestyle and establish a new cultural reference point for our target audience in order to drive our reappraisal.

Building our new ecosystem of influence - new rules for what an ambassador should be.

If we were going to do this, we had to be honest about why the old model had broken. The supermodel ambassador worked in an era of one-way media, scaled production, and aspirational distance. These conditions no longer held - so talking to real Aussie mums, we defined what a modern ambassador needed to deliver in 2025. *[SOURCE EIGHTTEEN]*

None of those conditions held anymore. So we set ourselves five new rules — a working playbook for what a modern retail ambassador needed to look like in 2025.

1. Recognisable over remarkable. The old playbook prized fame. The new one would prize relatability - to recognise someone from her own life.

2. Lived credibility over borrowed credibility. The old playbook borrowed authority by attaching a famous name to a product. We would build through someone whose own life, body and values align with BIG W - an actual customer, not a stranger to the brand.

3. Audience over reach. The old playbook counted impressions; the bigger name the better. We would build ours around the engagement of the Australian woman 25-54 who matter most to our brand.

4. Shared value over fee for service. The old playbook traded a fee for image rights. We needed to build credibility by having someone who is all-in across everything.

5. Always-on over one-shot. The old playbook was built around bursts; our new one would be native and match the rhythm of our audience's life. Reappraisal isn't a single moment; it's accumulation.

The brief was deliberately tight. We were not looking for the most famous or the most polished (sorry Margot Robie); we were looking for someone who satisfied every one of the new rules at once.

Round after round, one name remained on the list - Jules Robinson.

Using Hypetap's API data, we determined the perfect match - Jules Robinson and her 742K followers that were highly concentrated with our target demographic and matched perfectly to influence the brand's deficit.

A mother. A wife. A working business owner. The founder of FIGUR Shapewear - a brand she'd built from the ground up around inclusive sizing for real women's bodies. Recognisable but credible and authentic to our mission.

Footnotes
[SOURCE SIXTEEN]: Meltwater Social - Social Media Statistics 2026.
[SOURCE SEVENTEEN]: Hypetap Intelligence Qualitative Research 2025.
[SOURCE EIGHTEEN]: Hypetap Intelligence Qualitative Research 2025.

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Question Five: How did you bring it to life?

It started with a big strategic idea...

From the 'supermodel' on the billboard; to the voice in her feed.
BIG W re-wrote the fashion 'ambassador' playbook by shifting away from the traditional 'supermodel' endorsement to someone whose life, values and credibility were recognisable to the women the brand was designing for.

A truly modern ambassadorship with Jules Robinson based in real-life, reflected modern aspirations and based on shared values over borrowed fame.

We brought this to life on a simple creative promise – to disrupt the traditional department store 'ambassador' model with a healthy dose of reality.
No supermodel.
No glossy editorials.
No 30-second TV ad.

Just Jules living Jule's life - A modern woman; living a modern life, connecting with other women in a way relevant to their lives - with BIG W as the unexpected style backdrop to the moments that mattered to her; big or small.

The school run. Date night with Cam. A weekend away. The everyday rhythms of a working Australian mum's life – staged on her own social channels, in her own voice, in the places her audience already lived.

We let the style do the heavy lifting - featuring BIG W's SS25 & AW26 ranges not on the runway, but in the real world in a context that looked and sounded exactly like the customer we wanted to win back.

We showed them what relatable looks like, letting the clothes speak for themselves - It quickly became a disarming proposition for our audience who had grown up with retailers telling them what aspirational looks like.

A content engine, not a campaign.

To make this work, we built a continuous social engine rather than a series of bursts.

Across the active campaign window, Jules produced social content across Meta & TikTok that was native to the platform, her voice and her shared values with BIG W.

Content was paced to be consistent across the month - to fill the spaces of life rather than campaign requirements; with Jules' supercharging seasonal launches and new product drops in moments when BIG W needed to win in-market attention the most.

Proof, not just persona.

Our partnership became a lifestyle partnership; not just content platform with story telling across the seasons backed by brand proof that could drive ongoing action and relevance for the BIG W brand.

- Co-design and collaboration - Jules became more than the face of the brand; she became integral to future apparel design process for this audience - co-collaborating on the Spring/Summer26 womenswear range that will hit in 2026.

- We then updated the partnership by bringing Jules' own shapewear brand 'FIGUR' - built around inclusive sizing for women - into the BIG W marketplace.

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An evolving campaign.

The campaign ran in two distinct seasonal phases — Spring/Summer launching in August 2025, Winter launching in February 2026.

Summer taught us a critical lesson: distributed, consistent posting across a long window built awareness, but didn't peak attention when it mattered most. The audience was reacting to Jules' content but the commercial signal was clearest where her activity was tightest to a launch moment.

For Winter, we changed the pattern. Rather than spreading content evenly across the season, we concentrated Jules' activity into shorter, sharper bursts around key seasonal moments and product drops, trading constant presence for cultural punch.

The shift was meaningful with Winter compounding the effect of Spring/Summer into even bigger gains. This continuous collaboration enabled us to iterate and validate our strategy dynamically, surfacing insights that a singular, transactional ambassadorship would have failed to deliver.

Question Six: How did you know it was successful?

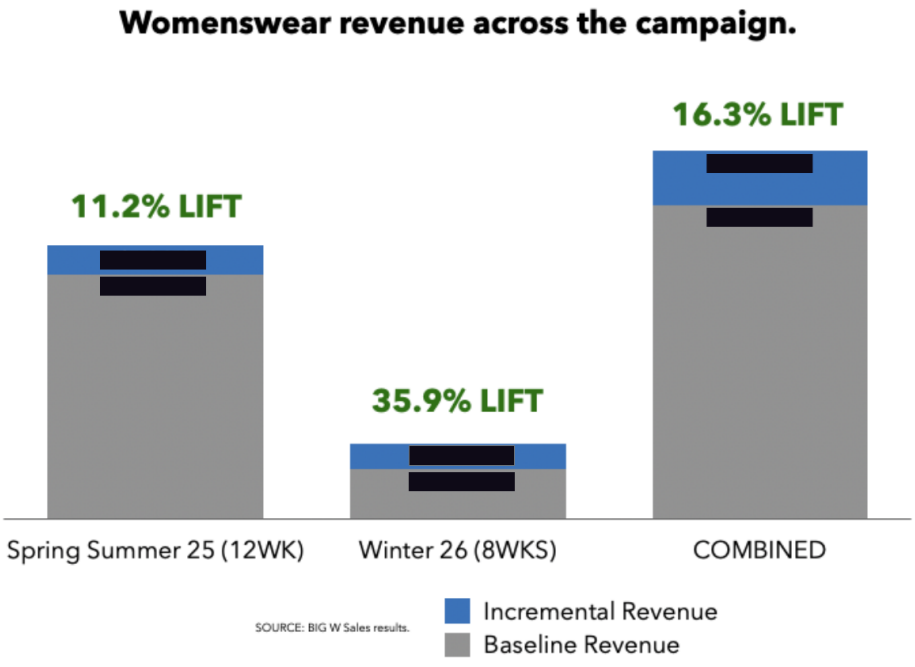
(NOT FOR PUBLICATION - JUDGES EYES UNDER NDA ONLY)

The campaign delivered demonstrable growth across every key performance metric we set out to achieve.

Commercial objective: Drive incremental revenue and margin uplift across womenswear.

Incremental Revenue.

We set a target to deliver 5% uplift against an expected *[SOURCE TWENTY]* baseline womenswear sales revenue from direct campaign activity; the campaign delivered **16.3% incremental growth - 226% above target.**



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It was a result that grew as our flighting strategy changed to be less spread out and more peak-led in shape to drive maximum impact. Winter when viewed alone delivered a result **618% above** target.

Price Elasticity.

With margin in decline, we aimed for the campaign to maintain the average selling price of featured products in line with the total range. The effect of the campaign was to not only maintain; but we saw an **average selling price increase by 14.3%.**

Profitability.

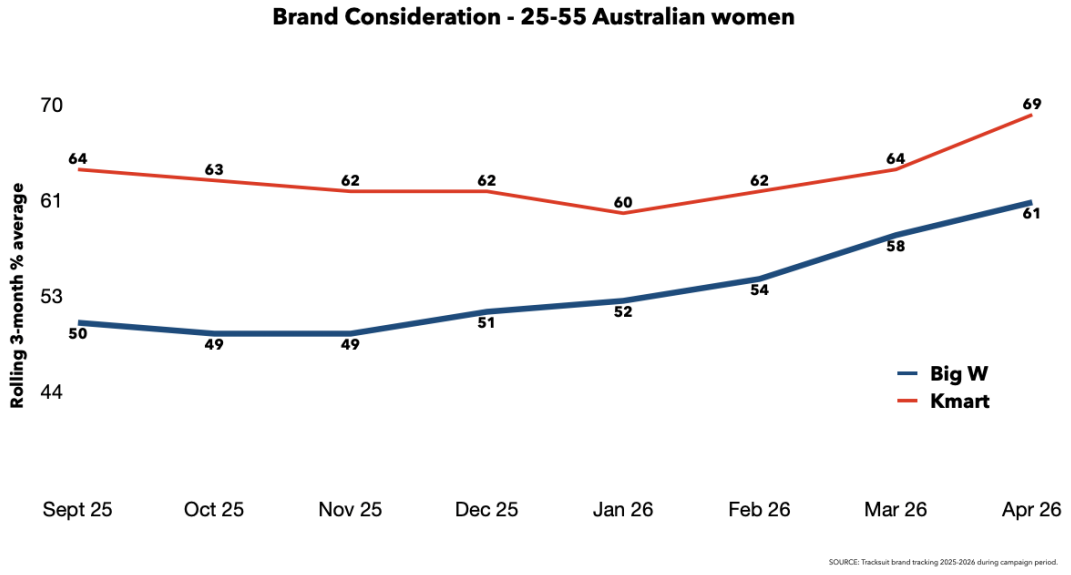
We set out to deliver a positive incremental gross profit return... for every $1 of marketing expenditure; the campaign delivered **$3.71 in gross profit return** demonstrating a high level of strategic and creative efficiency.

Due to commercial sensitivity; we elected to apply a 40% gross profit margin to our results which sits within an acceptable 38-42% range from other publicly listed department stores. *[SOURCE NINETEEN]*

Brand Objectives: Contribute to positive brand health and solving broader perceptual issues across our target audience.

Brand Consideration.

Amongst our target audience, we saw brand consideration **jump from 49% to 61%** across the campaign period - a lift of **24.4%.** *[SOURCE TWENTY-ONE]*



We not only saw a lift in consideration; but the gap between BIG W and our nearest competitor nearly halved - from 14PP to just 8PP difference.

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Social Brand Engagement.
We aimed to drive average social engagement above the 1.1% industry benchmark - across the totality of the campaign our content averaged 1.96% - a 78% increase on our target.

Communications Objectives: Own more than our fair share of the attention on social channels.

Social Share of Voice
Our aim wasn't to outspend or outshout the category, but to make the brand more distinct and worthy of attention. We maintained our position as **3rd in market with social share of voice, with just 25-30%** the amount of posting compared to our core competitor Kmart during the campaign period. *[SOURCE TWENTY-TWO]*

Social Sentiment.
Big W already led in positive social sentiment - with the aim to remain above 90% on average throughout the campaign (Kmart sat at 85%)... The brand achieved an average monthly social sentiment score of 91%. *[SOURCE TWENTY-THREE]*

Footnotes
[SOURCE NINETEEN]: Annual General Reports - Profit margin for David Jones, CRG Group & Myer.
[SOURCE TWENTY]: Brand Tracking - Tracksuit.
[SOURCE TWENTY-ONE]: What the business would have sold each week without Jules. Built from actual Non-Jules sales + a synthetic projection for Jules-featured products (using Non-Jules per-product-in-market rate). Sums to 106,777 units (winter) and 470,548 units (summer) over each window.
[SOURCE TWENTY-TWO]: Hypetap Intelligence Social Media Report - Aug 25-Mar 26.
[SOURCE TWENTY-THREE]: Hypetap Intelligence Social Media Report - Aug 25-Mar 26.

Question Seven: Was it a good investment?

ROI: For every $1 spent on the Jules Robinson ambassador fee, the campaign delivered $3.71 in incremental gross profit to BIG W.

That equates to a **2.7x return** on the campaign costs - from incremental commercial uplift on featured product alone, before accounting for any of the indirect or brand-level value the partnership generated.

[redacted]
Campaign Costs $150,000
[redacted]
Incremental ROI $3.71

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Question Eight: Convince us it wasn't due to other factors.

The macro environment across the campaign window was working *against* us, not for us meaning the Jules effect was achieved against, not because of, the prevailing conditions.

1. The counterfactual baseline was built from products Jules didn't feature.

The incremental revenue figure was not calculated against Jules-featured products' own historical performance. It was built from a baseline derived from BIG W womenswear products that Jules did *not* feature in the same period - controlling for natural product lifecycle, seasonal demand, broader BIG W marketing activity, and category-level conditions.

2. Pricing, distribution and product strategy were constant — and working against us.

BIG W's wider womenswear strategy during the campaign window was the *opposite* of what would produce a manufactured uplift. The company's FY25 disclosures explicitly cited *"a shift in strategy in apparel to lower-priced ranges and soft sales leading to higher discounting activity and subsequently lower gross margin across major categories such as womenswear"* — a category-wide deflationary pressure on Average Selling Price and margin [SOURCE: Woolworths Group F25 Annual Report]. Yet across Jules-featured products specifically, average selling price *rose 14.3%* during the campaign - directly counter to the prevailing range strategy. There was no incremental discounting on Jules-featured SKUs (ASP rose, not fell).

3. The weather was a headwind, not a tailwind.

The Bureau of Meteorology officially recorded 2025 as Australia's **fourth-warmest year on record**, with the national annual average temperature 1.23 °C above the long-term average and maximum temperatures 1.48 °C above average *[SOURCE: Bureau of Meteorology, Annual Climate Statement 2025]*.

This matters. Warmer winter weather is a headwind for winter apparel. ABS data showed Australian retailers citing *"warmer-than-usual weather for April [2025] saw people holding off on buying clothing items, especially new winter season stock" [SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics retail trade commentary, April 2025]*. Yet the strongest Jules-attributed lift came from Winter 2026 (+35.9% incremental revenue, +29.1% units) - a season the weather was actively working against. The result was achieved *despite* unfavourable conditions, not because of them.

4. Competitor activity remained steady.

Independent Hypetap data confirms Kmart's category Share of Voice remained at ~33-35% throughout the campaign window - the highest in the major-retailer set, and broadly unchanged from pre-campaign levels. The BIG W lift in cultural conversation happened in spite of, not because of, a softer competitive landscape.

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