



press clip

Of course it's real Synthetic diamonds shine in tough times

Erica Watson

DIAMONDS might be a girl's best friend but synthetic alternatives are now a close second offering more bling for their buck.

With their brilliant lustre, lifetime warranty and low price tag in tough economic times, the demand for diamond alternatives has soared.

Alana Chang, owner of moissanite jewellery store Moi Moi, said sales had jumped 50 per cent since the store's opening five years ago.

Made from the mineral silicon carbide, moissanite is the closest alternative to diamond, offering excellent brilliance, lustre and hardness.

Rebecca Brown, 29, and her husband Dom Corcoran bought her custom-made moissanite engagement ring for just under \$5000. The diamond equivalent would have set the couple back a cool \$150,000.

The Tiffany and Co-inspired setting totals about three carats.

"I don't know anyone that has been able to tell the difference at all," Ms Brown said.

Couples are using the spare cash to pay for their wedding, honeymoon or even a house deposit, Secrets Shhh jewellers managing director Jane Meredith said.

Sales of the store's diamond simulant engagement rings, made from mineral-based zirconium oxide and set in 18k white or yellow gold, have increased by 25 per cent in two years.

"[People are] really starting to reassess their values and how strongly they feel about whether a diamond is important to them," she said.

"Once they see [the alternative], feel them and experience them and they see that they are in a beautiful

setting just like a diamond, it really is like 'hang on a minute, what's the difference here?'"

But not everyone agrees.

"Some people have forgotten the reasons why a diamond has earned its reputation and value, which is deeper than its bling appeal," jewellery designer Stefano Canturi said.



Bling: Rebecca's moissanite ring



Nobody can tell: Rebecca Brown and her husband Dom Corcoran