

Billions of solutions draw game players

Scott Murdoch

WHEN Gold Coast psychologist Dr Mark Wood invented a unique puzzle to bend the mind almost two decades ago, he was confident he would find success.

Now, the Kaleidoscope Classic has been test marketed in India, is hitting the Australian shops and demand is coming in from around the world.

The puzzle, which boasts it has 60 billion ways to be solved, is made up of 18 colour-coded pieces which are made into individual patterns.

The most common pattern, a chequerboard, is said to have 20 billion different ways to be made and it's that intrigue that has the game selling fast.

The intellectual property of the puzzle has been patented and commercialised by Gold Coast company Mind Challenge which has big plans to take it global.

Chief executive Vishal Mehrotra said the group planned to further penetrate the Australian and New Zealand markets before looking abroad.

However, with interest from the US and Europe, the company will not back away from a contract.

In Brisbane, the Kaleidoscope is provided in the executive suites of the Hilton and at Zaraffa's coffee shops to challenge customers.

The concept was initially funded by former JB Were Queensland manager Marcus Tittley.

"We think its success so far goes back to the fundamental factor that it is simple," Mr Mehrotra said.

"You have to keep it simple so people understand it. There's also the fiddle factor involved.

"That's why the Rubik's Cube was so successful."

The Kaleidoscope was released to the Australian retail market before Christmas but stock sold out within a week.

Mr Mehrotra said the initial success of the puzzle was also attributed to its marketing at three age groups.

"We have done extensive test marketing," Mr Mehrotra said.

"In about nine months in India it has gone from its introduction to being in 400 stores and has become the stand-out product of the puzzle sector.

"We did not originally put it on shelves, we gave each individual retailer a sample and let them road test it."

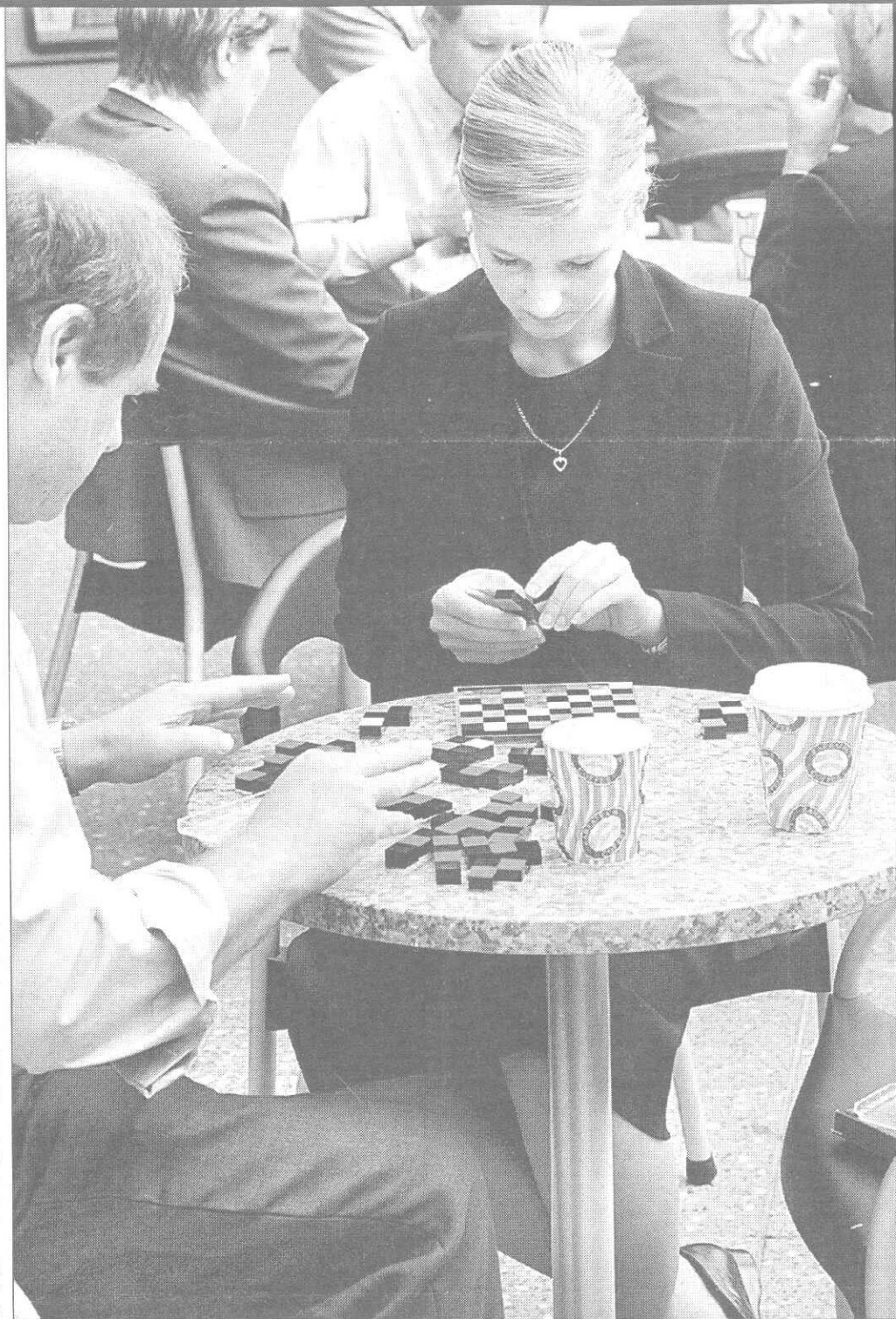
The Kaleidoscope, he said, was aimed at children, then university students and finally older people looking for a challenge.

With so many solutions available Kaleidoscope says players would never find the same one twice — a fact Dr Woods said made it appealing.

The Kaleidoscope was originally based on the design of a Swedish product which was tweaked to add intrigue and challenge.

The puzzle has put computer mathematical programs to the test and Mind Challenge plans to hold competitions around Australia for quizzical players.

The company has stepped up production of the Kaleidoscope at its manufacturing plant which has the capacity to cope with increases in demand cost efficiently.



PLAYERS with unique puzzle Kaleidoscope . . . the game is provided in Zaraffa's coffee place in Brisbane and Hilton executive suites. Picture: Russell Shakespeare