

It's all your fault, says Greek boss

Article from: *Sunday Herald*

INTRALOT'S Australian chief John Katakis's message to Victorians is blunt - the Greek gambling giant is here for the long haul.

But this week Mr Katakis defended his company's performance, blaming lotto agents for its appalling sales figures and Victorians for not understanding its games.

He also blamed Tattersall's and Optus for the company's problems breaking into the Victorian market.

"People did not play - they did not play it properly - it's something that takes time," Mr Katakis said.

"It's like playing roulette, if you do not know how to play, roulette you cannot play."

And rather than apologising to the retailers who have paid up to \$10,000 to sell Intralot's products, Mr

Katakis says the company should have been tougher with them, as they are overseas.

"Our problem with the retailers is the following - we never imposed any sales targets," he said.

"We gave them the rights to sell our products and this was clearly stated in the (internal) agreements, so it is up to them how good salesmen they are in order to sell the product.

"In other countries we follow the rule of the sales target.

"We say 'OK, these are the rules, if you are going to sell you will make money. If you don't I'm going to take away your equipment'."

Mr Katakis said the company had tried to educate players through retailers, but understood they did not have the time to explain the games.

"With the retailers, we understand we have a prob-

lem that they don't understand the games, so now we have established a team to go around shop by shop to tell them to achieve what we want to achieve," he said.

Intralot's first year of operation has been dogged by controversy - unhappy retailers, technical problems and revenues a fraction of what was promised.

Documents seen by the *Sunday Herald* show the company is likely to fall \$226 million short of its sales target of \$293 million this financial year.

It has also been mired in political controversy, even before it was granted its licence by the Bracks Government in 2007, with accusations of secret meetings in Athens between its leadership and then gaming minister, John Pandazopoulos.

Lottery Agents Association of Victoria CEO Peter Judkins hit back at the

Intralot chief's accusations.

"You can't set sales targets for products that the customers don't want," he said.

"Intralot have got to wake up to themselves. They misread this market. They did not understand the nature of our customers."

Mr Katakis acknowledged that Victorians had been slow to take to the company's games, which have been criticised for not offering big enough prizes, but said the problem was caused by Tattersall's and the retailers.

"All the games of Tattersall's are lotto games, pool games, jackpot oriented, so the players don't care what they buy," he said.

"They say, 'I want a quick pick and I don't care about the game', so the essence of the game was lost."

Mr Judkins said that approach may work well in Europe, but was not suited to the Australian market.

"Our customers are buying a dream - they don't want a dream of \$10,000, they want a dream of \$10 million," he said.

Since July, Intralot has been plagued by technical problems, said to have been caused by the company's reliance on a wireless network run by Optus.

One successful agent in the western suburbs said after the complicated games, computer problems were a turn-off for his customers.

Mr Katakis said the problems with the network were not Intralot's fault.

"In New Zealand we didn't have a single point of failure, but then there - Telecom New Zealand behaved properly - they did what they were supposed to do," he said.

Mr Katakis defended the company's record.

"We are a global player," he said.

"We are here for the long haul."

Take a dip into Greek cuisine

OLIVE TREE BISTRO 100 Bridge Rd, Glebe Phone: 9552 9700 Food: Greek Service: Pleasant

It may sound odd, but occasionally it makes a refreshing change to enjoy home-style cooking in a restaurant.

Rather than slick, production-line fare made without much love by kitchen hands with no stake in the operation, it's nice to enjoy food that's obviously created with care by people who know what they're doing.

Such is the case at Glebe's Olive Tree Bistro, where slick, impersonal cooking is not the order of the day, but fine, home-made fare triumphs

Unlike many flashier venues that open in a blaze of publicity, Olive Tree opened quietly last year and very quickly built a reputation among locals for high-quality Greek food served in a friendly, low-key environment.

The restaurant is at the Excelsior Hotel in an airy, homey space comprising two or three rooms above the pub, with high ceilings, polished floors and olive-coloured walls.

A mural of an olive tree

adorns one wall.

The menu is simple, classic Greek food, with a large choice of mezze (or shared, entree-style plates) ranging from kalamata olives, tzatziki (yoghurt and cucumber dip), spinach triangles and calamari (entrees cost \$6-\$14) and a decent list of mains stretching from vegetarian moussaka to 350g grain-fed rib-eye steaks served on the bone (a bargain for \$22).

And even though there's nothing terribly surprising on offer, the cooking is anything but ordinary.

We start with tamara (or caviar) dip (\$7) served with pita bread (\$2). The dip, beautifully handmade, is neither thick, nor runny, and has a delicious lemony aftertaste.

The pita bread we order to mop up the dip is really delicious, too, the bread benefiting from being seared on the char-grill.

Mezze offerings of baked Greek feta with fresh tomatoes and herbs (\$12) and chickpea fritters with yoghurt sauce (\$10) follow, and both prove honest and generous.

Both dishes are very enjoy-

able too - especially the feta, which comprises thick slicks of this crumbly cheese sitting on hearty slices of tomato, baked with olive oil and dried oregano flakes.

The fritters are chunky, the chickpeas mixed with vegetables and dill, and the yoghurt sauce is heady with dill, making the combination perfect.

Although the entrees are filling, we persevere with mains, sampling char-grilled organic quails marinated in olive oil, lemon and wild oregano (\$23), and prawns cooked with fresh tomato, feta and herbs with rice (\$23).

The butterflied quails are perfectly cooked, nicely charred outside but juicy inside, and the marinade is classic Mediterranean.

The two birds, still searingly hot, come with terrific handcut chips and a cabbage salad.

The prawns are served heads and tails on, and lie on a bed of plain rice, with the tomato, parsley and feta sauce spread on top. It's a well-balanced, not to mention plentiful, dish.

Indeed, the meal is so enormous, it's impossible to fit in even a small slice of sticky



baklava for desert.

As we force down the final morsels of our feast, we notice a large table dining in one corner of the restaurant.

It's clearly the chef's family enjoying a late dinner. And

why wouldn't they? With food this good, it would be silly to eat anywhere else.

All meals are paid for and visits are unannounced

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