

## "I'LL be back," promised George Linardos

"I'LL be back," promised George Linardos yesterday, serving up an espresso to a customer dismayed to hear the Glebe deli owner was selling up.

Glebe Point Road has become littered with empty shopfronts since the financial crisis hit, with at least 12 businesses shutting down. Signs in empty windows reveal that many have been locked out by landlords impatient for rental arrears.

An Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry survey yesterday showed small businesses experiencing the worst conditions in 13 years, with most pessimistic about economic growth in the year ahead. Falling demand from customers and difficulty obtaining credit from banks were the top impediments in the March quarter.

"The RBA may have been too cautious to date in lowering rates," said the chamber's director of industry policy and economics, Greg Evans.

He said risk-averse banks had been giving small



Empty... all that remains of Glebe's hardware store.  
Photo: Steven Siewert

business owners tough treatment as the credit crunch bit. "There are a lot of robust small business-

es with long trading records and the banks aren't taking the time to understand them," he said.

Mr Linardos said his customers had been holding back on luxuries. "People would have more courage to buy this \$34 hamper of Swiss chocolate if they had more faith in the future," he said. "I aim to sell, have a rest and reopen after one year, in the same area. It's good to have a break from business. You take it home, you care too much."

Ben Nurse, 80, ran the hardware store in Glebe for 25 years before closing down in March. Council roadworks that dragged on for two years had dented passing trade. "When the global financial crisis came we said, 'That's it. That's the end of it.' Everyone became very tight with their money and would only spend if something fell off the wall. Paint sales went down enormously," he said.

Article from the Sydney Morning Herald

## Greek forests turn to Google for post-fires protection

ATHENS (AFP) — The head of a Greek forest destroyed by a wave of wildfires in 2007 that killed 77 people said Tuesday that rangers are using old Internet satellite photography to protect land from illegal housebuilding.

"We are using Google Earth's photographs from before the fires as a reference point to prevent all illegal exploitation or theft" of some 25,000 hectares of woodlands in the country's south-west, said Dionysos Thomopoulos.

The forestry decision will bring some relief to the US company, which on Monday saw its popular urban feature -- Street View -- banned from taking any more images on the nation's streets over fears of privacy invasions.

"It's much more practical than traditional aerial photographs, because we have the exact geographical co-ordinates which we can compare with our measurements on the ground," Thomopoulos added.

Even in the absence of a natural disaster such as the heatwaves that devastated around 270,000 hectares (667,000 acres) of forest and farmland, Greece is prone to seeing land grabbed for rogue property speculation.

However, Thomopoulos said that "people are beginning to show understanding," saying there are "far fewer attempts" at using fire-ravaged forest land for illegal private use.

Costas Kalabokidis, a natural disaster researcher, said after the 2007 fires that many Greeks would be willing to turn a blind eye to a burning forest if they could build a summer home on the embers.

## Acropolis treasures on display for euro1

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — A month before the lavish opening ceremony for the new Acropolis Museum, Greek officials are keeping quiet on the details — other than the nearly euro3 million (\$4.1 million) price tag.

But in a bid to boost visitor numbers in hard economic times, Culture Minister Antonis Samaras announced Wednesday there would be cut-price tickets for the landmark building. Greece hopes the long-delayed venue will help its campaign to regain the Elgin Marbles.

Samaras said admission will cost euro1 (\$1.4) for the first six months — as much as a public bus ticket.

"We have taken into account the difficulties stemming from the global crisis," Samaras told a news conference a month before the official inauguration, which he said international heads of state and government have been invited to attend.

"The price is unexpectedly low ... but I believe that is totally necessary to allow everyone to visit the New Acropolis Museum," Samaras said.

Initially scheduled to open before the 2004 Athens Olympics, the euro129 million (\$177 million) building crouches at the foot of the Acropolis like a skewed stack of smoked glass boxes. It will host most of the Acropolis finds — including some of the best surviving works of classical sculpture that once adorned the citadel's marble temples.

About 2.5 million visitors are expected every year, and officials say they will be subjected to "airport-style" security screening. For the first three days, around 2,200 tickets will be on sale online.

Samaras said the inaugural ceremony will not be directly used to promote Greece's campaign for the return of



the Elgin — or Parthenon — Marbles from the British Museum in London.

British museum officials have rebuffed repeated Greek requests for the 2,500-year-old works, removed 200 years ago by Scottish diplomat Lord Elgin when Greece was still an unwilling part of the Ottoman Empire. They argue that the collection was legally acquired from Lord Elgin and is accessible, free of charge, to millions of visitors.

But Samaras said the new museum's display — which will highlight the absence of about half the surviving Parthenon sculptures — would turn public opinion in Greece's favor.

"The presence of thousands of visitors will be much stronger than any public statement (on the dispute)," Samaras said.

Details of the June 20 opening ceremony are a closely guarded secret.

Samaras said it would involve new technology that would "place the antiquities in a more familiar context to modern visitors."

Designed by U.S.-based architect Bernard Tschumi in collaboration with Greece's Michalis Photiadis, the new museum will contain more than 4,000 ancient works in 215,000 square feet (20,000 square meters) of display

space.

The highlight of the exhibition will be the top story where Greece's Parthenon sculptures will be displayed in their original alignment in a glass hall, with the ancient temple visible as a backdrop about 400 meters away.

The project has been dogged by repeated delays and criticized for its size and proximity to the Acropolis — a U.N. world heritage site.

Construction work disrupted an entire underlying neighborhood of ancient and early Christian Athens, prompting legal wrangling. Many of these ruins have been incorporated in the museum basement and are visible through glass panels.

Museum director Dimitris Pantermalis said some excavation work would continue after the inauguration.

Greek officials have also angered architects and conservationists over a decision to demolish two century old residential buildings that obstruct part of the view of the Acropolis from the new museum.

Samaras said Wednesday the ministry is now thinking of preserving the structures' ornamental facades and transplanting them onto new buildings to be erected near the museum.