



Stacking up: Andrew and Briggita Baker with the IQube game and puzzle which has attracted interest from distributors around the world. The educational game was developed by Andrew as a project while he was at Canterbury University. Picture: JOHN SELKIRK

Student project becomes global game

MICHAEL HERMAN

A UNIVERSITY project completed 15 years ago has blossomed into an award-winning educational game with huge export potential for its inventor.

A recent addition to the \$5.7 billion global board game market, the IQube game and puzzle made its international debut at the Australian Toy Hobby and Nursery Fair and has since scooped a silver award from an influential United States evaluator of children's products, as well as attracted interest from distributors around the world.

Parents Choice Foundation senior toy editor and US children's

toy authority Ruth Roufberg awarded the Silver Honour award to the IQube in the seven-and-up category, effectively endorsing its educational and commercial value.

When Auckland-based inventor Andrew Baker developed the educational game while at Canterbury University he had little idea his project would one day provide an income let alone be on the verge of becoming an international hit.

Encouraged by his own children's enthusiasm for the game and his wife Briggita's desire to replace her corporate recruitment position with a home-based business, Mr Baker, now the general manager of a New Zealand affiliate of a large multinational company,

is realising that before long he too might be working fulltime in their company, IQ Ideas.

Mrs Baker said they took IQube to the Australian fair in April to gauge interest in the game and because they knew of no similar event in New Zealand.

"We knew absolutely nothing about the toy and game industry ... We bowled along to Melbourne and discovered the fair was absolutely huge — we had the smallest booth in the whole complex."

However, public and distributor interest quickly confirmed the game had become a business.

"It was a huge success; we were just utterly stunned. The plan had been that Andrew would be on the

stand for a few days and I would go shopping — I didn't get to do any shopping because I was so flat out."

IQube sales in the Australian market alone have exceeded initial expectations and Mr Baker is already working on two new versions of the educational game — genius and junior grade for under-sevens.

"We are thrilled with the response the IQube has received," he said.

"Parents and educators are enthusiastic about it. It gets kids away from video-type games and encourages them to use their brains both creatively and strategically."