

HORRORSCOPE FOR THE CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR SEASON 2014:

To allow for the vagaries of the universe and interpretative inexactitude, it might pay to read everyone else's stars as well.

ARIES

The phone rings just as dinner is about to boil over. You pick it up and there's just the sound of the universe. Then, just before you can save the stove, a voice speaking with a peg on its nose asks if you are someone whose name sounds not entirely dissimilar to yours. On days like this, enjoy your hang-ups.

TAURUS

All that glitters is not viable gold. Well, not the widely-spaced ore particles that require an expensive processing plant to extract. What is at the end of the rainbow? Heads or tailings, ah, best of three? Got any more money? Oh well, see you round then.

GEMINI

Many of you will suffer broken expectations in the coming year. Those of you living along the Cooma Road will most likely suffer broken front suspension as well. Some shocks are so astronomical they can not be absorbed.

CANCER

Look out! You've got Aquarius rising at the beach house, Antechinus nibbling in the out-house and it looks like we've got ascendant morons in the Upper House.

LEO

Whoopee! Those dockety things you buy from the newsagent have finally paid off. You're in the money and surrounded by friends. Funnily enough, you never realised just how many really good friends you have.

VIRGO

Be aware of the perfidious television, HD theatre-sized or pocket-size. It's all the same message: consume, consume, consume.

sume. Don't worry, there's always cash converters if you're short and now there are smiling debt consolidation consultants as well. Having your credit cards maxed out has never been so much fun.

LIBRA

Your life is under the influence of cycles this month. You might make it through the wash cycle and the rinse cycle but find great unbalance in your spin cycle. You'll need to assess your life's load and ensure that it's evenly distributed around the cosmological agitator.



SCORPIO

Then of course, you could ignore the stars and find your faith elsewhere. How about Gaia? She's a tough sheila so the local book says. Or flip a coin; heads I'm going to enjoy financial security and good health; tails I'm off to the pub.

SAGITTARIUS

Houston, we have a problem. As you all know an genethliacal influence occurs when you take your first breath. It is the relative positions of celestial bodies that sets your destiny. But satellites, space junk and toxic electromagnetic radiation from banal mobile phone conversations is polluting the purity of having your life characteristics set at birth. If all else fails try to hold your breath long enough to need resuscitating into a better sign.

CAPRICORN

Don't forget the cycle of sevens. Remember, when you're in the aisle piling up the trolley, two times seven items will lead to an adverse outcome later in a long queue of overloaded trolleys when they yell out, "Twelve items or less?".

AQUARIUS

In the year of the rat, especially the bush year, problems could be looming your way. Especially the wiring loom in that precious vintage car down in the shed. All the indicators show a dim future when the wipers come on unexpectedly.

PISCES

A good Christmas and holiday period is one shared with friends, even relatives if you're lucky and they overlap. Take it easy and lie under the sky, smell a tree, hear a bird, eat and drink. Feel the pull of the planets and the stars. They're on your side. In fact, on every side.

Alice in Gondwanaland

Living in a dream state

"CURIOUSER AND curiouser!" cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English).

In Lewis Carroll's book, Alice falls down a rabbit hole and into a surreal world where nothing makes sense.

Does that sound familiar? How about this quote from the Prime Minister.

"We accept that climate change happens, that mankind, humanity, makes a contribution to it and it's important that we take strong and effective action against it," Mr Abbott said. [SYDNEY MORNING HERALD]

Back to Alice in Wonderland:

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly. "Explain yourself!" "I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir" said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the Caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied very politely, "for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing."

The Prime Minister now agrees that human-induced climate change is real, a reversal of his well-publicised earlier opinion that it was, "absolute crap".

So, the science is accepted, the predicted outcome is believed, the scale of the problem acknowledged — but no particular urgency is deemed required. We should not do more than anyone else lest it affect our standard of living and anyway there's only a few of us and our contribution to overall planetary pollution is negligible. So goes the argument for doing more or less nothing.

When Tony Abbott acknowledges that, 'mankind, humanity, makes a contribution to climate change', he must mean the burning of fossil fuels. There are other factors at work such as land clearing, but it is the burning of stored carbon and the releasing of ancient carbon dioxide that is the biggest contributor to climate change.

Why is it, that after all this time, politicians will not say out loud, "burning coal is a problem that we need to address — and we will".

But then there's Alice in Queensland. "Scientists warn that Queensland is likely to be increasingly affected by changes in temperature, rainfall, sea level and extreme weather events. With this knowledge, it is prudent that the government respond by managing these potential risks using the best available science."



Into the future by Paul Cockram

"The Queensland Government is already responding to the climate challenge by working to identify and implement adaptation measures. Steps include working to reduce the pollution pressures on our environment and building resilience in our communities." [WWW.QLD.GOV.AU]

Where does that leave the massive mines proposed for the Galilee basin in Queensland? This saga has all the trappings of a mad hatter's tea party. Campbell Newman, Gina Rinehart, Clive Palmer and G V Sanjay Reddy with Barnaby Joyce and Julie Bishop as the wedding guests.

I must leave you, the readers, to check it out for yourselves and decide who is which 'Wonderland' character.

G V Sanjay Reddy from the Indian conglomerate GVK says:

"The Galilee Basin project perfectly fits GVK's global aspirations to be one of the most reliable coal suppliers in the world. Following the best practices in operations and environmental sustainability for the integrated 'pit to port project', comprising mining, rail and port, we will create jobs,

contribute to the economic development of the region and improve quality of life, thus contribute our bit, to the society." [GVKHANCOCKCOAL.COM]

But, as American environmentalist Bill McKibben points out:

"Even before new mines are opened up, there is already more than five times as much carbon in current fossil fuel reserves as we can safely burn — equivalent to 2795 gigatons of CO₂, against the 500 gigatons even the most conservative governments would allow." [THE AUSTRALIAN]

So if the Queensland government is fair dinkum when it says it is, 'already responding to the climate challenge by working to identify and implement adaptation measures' you might think it would act with caution when evaluating such a vast new source of carbon pollution.

But boasts Campbell Newman, the 'can-do' premier of Queensland:

"They [GVK] want coal to come for their thermal power stations day in, day out, week in, week out, month after month, for not 10 years or 20 years or 50 years; they want it to come for 70 to 100 years". [AUSTRALIAN MINING]

Even if we put all the greenhouse gas worries in the too-hard basket, the mining of the Galilee Basin is still a monumental socio-economic blunder. The poor, or at least less well-off, people of the world do not deserve to be attached to a mining magnate's power station — millions of poles and wires to connect every corner of the planet — a power bill on one end and a fat cat collecting the money at the power station end.

In all parts of the world, solar power at an individual or local community level is the best available technology for the future. Wind, geo-thermal and yet-to-be-invented or perfected methods will help power our cities.

Coal and gas generation will continue to provide bulk power for decades to come, but they are finite reserves and it is prudent to increasingly phase them out. Apart from the pollution, their irreplaceability requires us to share the resource with future generations.

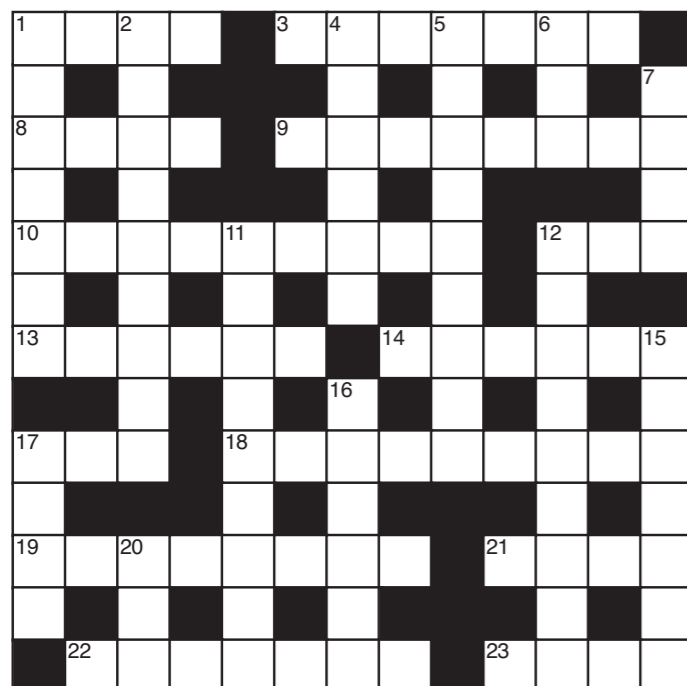
Alice can have the penultimate word: "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where," said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

But when like Alice, we do wake up, it matters a great deal which way we go.

BRAIDWOOD? BAFFLER #5



ACROSS

1. Blemish (4)
3. ?Eat them or pull them apart for a gift? (7)
8. Within (4)
9. Benny Goodman's instrument (8)
10. Lifeless (9)
12. ?...three bags full ...? (3)
13. Sound system (6)
14. ?End up like this by visiting 5 Down too often? (6)
17. Abbreviated form of address (3)
18. Unites (9)
19. Popular word game (8)
21. Surname of Charlotte Bronte's mousey heroine (4)
22. ?Smart aleck in the USA? (7)
23. Bother (4)

DOWN

1. ?On trees at Christmas or at the bottom of gardens? (7)
2. Echidnas (9)
4. ?Slick miner? (6)

5. Serves the drinks (9)
6. ?Negative prefix? (3)
7. Alternative to one of 1. down, but not in the garden! (4) 11.
11. Unspeakable (9)
12. When making a purchase it is ...? (4,2,3)
15. Rough sleepers (7)
16. ?They are all grown up? (6)
17. ?This plus drizzle is called mizzle hereabouts? (4)
20. A French king (3)

SOLUTION TO BAFFLER #4

