

Herald Sun

Reasons to be cheerful

NEW Year's Day is a natural time to turn our thoughts from the year past to the one just beginning.

Looking forward to the rest of 2013, there are many things to celebrate and reasons to be optimistic.

For the men and women of Australia's armed forces and their families, 2013 promises to be a good year as our departure from Afghanistan gathers pace. By this time next year, our soldiers should be acting only in an advisory role, which should see fewer of them in danger.

On the political front, developments in 2013 are likely to be cause for celebration, too.

For more than two years now, Australia has endured its first minority government since the World War II.

Few of us have enjoyed the experience. The good news is that, whatever else may happen in 2013, this experiment is likely to come to an end this year when a general election is held.

If Tony Abbott wins, as seems likely, Coalition voters will no doubt rejoice and Labor folk will reflect on how things might have been different. But no matter who we vote for this year, all of us can celebrate the end of this addled Parliament that has seen our politicians sink to new lows in public affection.

We can only hope that a return to majority government — of whatever stripe — will also see an end to the nastiness that characterised so much of our political life in 2012.

Turning to the economy, here, there are reasons to be optimistic going into this year as well.

At the time of writing, there is still no word from Washington, DC, on whether America's lawmakers will reach a deal

to avoid their country plunging over the so-called fiscal cliff.

While there is no doubt it would be better for the world that there be a deal — if for no other reason than to show that America's political system is capable of compromise — the consequences of failure might not be as bad as some have predicted. If going over the fiscal cliff were to stall the country's economic recovery that would be regrettable. But the US cannot keep increasing its debt forever. At some point it needs to begin repairing its public finances. It may as well be now. And looking at the problem from a selfish point of view, the effects of an American recession on

Australia would be negligible while the benefits to the whole world stemming from that repair would be many.

In our own region, the signs are good as we get ready to head back to work, with China's economy picking up

steam in the last quarter of 2012.

For those of us with a mortgage, 2013 promises to be a good year too, with interest rates tipped to keep falling, while those looking to buy a house will be well placed to take advantage of the fall in property prices last year.

On a lighter note, we should all rejoice in the fact that 2013 will likely see the end of the mania for "Gangnam style" dancing and a welcome return to obscurity for PSY (above), its Korean creator.

And for those of us who love cricket, 2013 will be a year to cherish, with a record nine Ashes Test matches between England and Australia to be played in both countries.

The *Herald Sun* wishes all our readers a safe and happy New Year.



Susie O'Brien



CHANGING LIVES

A weighty issue to consider

LOSING weight is always the No.1 new year's resolution. But despite this, there are worrying signs that Australians are ready to wave the white flag in our battle with the bulge. In many cases, we're getting too fat to get our hands high enough to wave anything other than our bingo wings.

If you listened to some leading doctors last year, you might believe there is little point dieting and exercising.

In an astounding revelation, obesity expert Professor John Dixon said that very obese people could generally expect to lose only 10 per cent of their body fat through diet and exercise.

But he says bariatric surgery, often known as lap-band surgery, can cause people to lose 20 to 30 per cent, and should be much more widely available.

I really hate to think how many people will take such news as an

invitation to give up trying to lose weight naturally.

At a time when Australians are bigger than ever, it seems crazy to me that losing weight through sensible eating and exercise is increasingly under question.

However, Melbourne woman Sigrid de Castella is proof there is another way.

She is a living example that you don't need life-threatening surgery to lose weight, keep it off, and get your life back.

If you think Sigrid's last name sounds familiar, it's possibly because she's related to Robert de Castella, the Australian marathon runner.

When Sigrid wore size-30 dresses, the constant comparison to her famous relative was humiliating and depressing.

As she writes in her new book, *Half the Woman I Was*, people's pitiful gazes asked the question they dared not ask: "So why are you so

Way to stay focused

Rod Chester



PROJECT 365

If a picture says 1000 words then 2013 is the time for me to say a great deal.

Some people begin the new year with resolutions. I'm beginning the new year with a regimented campaign.

This will be the year that I record each day one image at a time. Well, this will be the second year that I stop each day to take a picture.

Back in 2011, I began my first 365, inspired by the power of my then new iPhone 4 and the vague idea that I should do something with it. The old rule for photographers is that the best camera is the one you have with you.

One of the unexpected results of the smartphone explosion is that if you give people a simple camera to take with them everywhere, then everywhere they go they will simply want to take pictures.

When I started my 365, I had vague ideas of improving my photographic skills.

If I had to look for an interesting photo each day, was my logic, eventually that hunt would become a matter of course.

It turns out that taking a photo is just part of a 365 journey. When you set out to translate your life into a picture, you focus on what parts of each day make it into the frame.

Mere moments become memories. The passing of each day creates a bigger picture.

But there is more to it than that. This taking a picture of your life can be more about looking out than in.

Some people attack a 365 in a solitary manner. I prefer the social approach.

Back in 2011, I started my journey by joining a Flickr group of more than 800 people. Each day as I shared my life, I also found people who wanted to share theirs.

There was the businessman in Canada who documented with dignity the passing of his mother.

There was the woman in Michigan who took photos even on those days when she dealt with trauma of yet another miscarriage.

Then there was the man in England who used the project to tackle, and conquer, his battle with anxiety.

There is a bunch of us, a gang

TOUCHED BY THE ROAD TOLL

THIS YEAR
279

LAST YEAR
286

Victorian deaths in 2012, compared with the same day last year.