



Launceston Skeptics Society organiser Jin-oh Choi says doomsday hype is vastly overrated.

## No need for doom and gloom, sceptics advise

By JAMES BRADY

THE apocalypse will happen tonight, but not as you expect.

Depending on who you believe, the end of the Mayan calendar at 10.11pm could see everything from devastating meteors, to a change in the world's polarity — even as far as visits from extraterrestrials.

However, you can remove the tin foil from your head, emerge from your bunkers and return to normality — it will occur quite harmlessly, phew.

The doomsday hype was brought to global attention by what Launceston Skeptics Society organiser Jin-oh Choi described as over-excited enthusiasts. "It's not the first time that we've had this possibility that the world could end," he said.

He said the original meaning of apocalypse was "lifting the veil" — it meant regeneration,

or a new beginning. In that sense, the Mayan apocalypse will happen. Today marks the end of the Mayan's 13th baktun (long-count calendar).

Each baktun has 144,000 days — about 394 years.

Mr Choi said the previous baktun was clocked on September 18, 1618.

There have been more than 20 doomsday dates predicted in the past 12 years. These have ranged from the return of the Antichrist to the return of Christ, the Y2K bug and planets colliding with Earth.

There was also an interesting theory in June from Puerto Rican prophet Jose Luis de Jesus. Mr De Jesus predicted the fall of government and world economies, which would allow him and his followers to fly and walk through walls.

Needless to say, it didn't happen.

### IN BRIEF

**NSW girl drowns:** A girl has drowned in a waterway south of Perth. The toddler went missing near the Mandurah estuary bridge about 8pm Wednesday, after she slipped away from her parents. A major search was launched, involving water police, aircraft and volunteer water rescue workers. Duty Inspector Bill Norton said yesterday. Hundreds of members of the public also joined the search after a message went out on Facebook. Water police divers conducted a night dive in the area and located the child's body.

**Boycott rumour a croc:** Gold Coast lifesavers have been quick to take a bite out of rumours they are contemplating a boycott of an inflatable rescue boat event in Darwin due to fears of becoming a croc's dinner. A media report yesterday claimed competitors were considering a boycott of July's IRB championships at Darwin's Mindil Beach over worries one of the reptiles might fancy dining out during the competition. Surf Life Saving Queensland said there has been no boycott talk.

**Probe denied:** Perth Glory and a mining company chaired by the soccer club's owner, Tony Sage, say they are not at the centre of a federal police investigation following a raid on their offices. The club and Cape Lambert Resources were among several business and residential properties in Perth and Sydney associated with Mr Sage that were raided by the Australian Federal Police on Wednesday. Cape Lambert said in a statement lodged with the Australian Securities Exchange yesterday that the raids were not directly related to its business.

**Mental health funds:** The West Australian government has committed \$15.3 million over three years for a youth mental health service providing early psychosis intervention and treatment. The Early Psychosis Youth Centre will be the first of its kind in the state and has been designed to assist about 600 youngsters aged 15 to 24 years a year. The EPYC will include a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week home-based assessment service provided by doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists.

## Apology

In the Coles catalogue on sale Wednesday 19th December, we have advertised Coles Brand Petite Pavlovas or Meringues 12 Pack. Unfortunately there is no further stock available of these products.

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## \$20,000 for contempt

THE publisher of Hobart newspaper *The Mercury* has been fined \$20,000 for contempt of court for publishing the name and photo of a victim of sexual assault.

Martine Haley, who was acting editor at the time, escaped conviction and punishment. Justice Helen Wood noted Ms Haley had no knowledge of the story before it was published in January and would have stopped it if she had. Last month, publisher Davies Brothers Ltd was also fined \$10,000 for another breach of the law preventing the identification of sexual assault victims.

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