

Paddling for restoration of Lake Pedder – Press Release

The Paddle for Pedder, held Sunday March 1, was a colourful step-up in the campaign to restore the beautiful natural Lake Pedder, drowned by the Middle Gordon hydro-electric scheme in 1972.

In intermittent sunshine and against a brisk north-westerly breeze, eleven kayakers paddled from Scotts Peak to regroup over the sunken lake 13 kilometres away to call for the restoration of the original Lake Pedder and surrounding environs

Organised by Tasmanian Adventurer Andy Szollosi, the kayakers raised the Restore Pedder banner floating along where the original 1km wide and 3km long beach is submerged. “We battled some significant headwinds in the morning, and it was looking doubtful that we’d be able to raise our giant sail of a banner from the kayaks. After lunch, the winds died right down, giving us the perfect weather window for us to hold our banner up over the sight of the original lake.”

On the evening before the Paddle, the kayakers came together with more than twenty supporters of the restoration including Christine Milne and Bob Brown.

“We are in the extraordinary position where it can be restored, it can be and it will be. This is not a distant dream but a coming reality,” shared Bob who first called for Pedder to be saved as a young doctor living in Liffey.

After seeing the kayakers off from Scotts Peak, the Convenors of the Lake Pedder Restoration Committee, Christine Milne and Todd Dudley took another group of people walking near Strathgordon in an information session for those wanting to know how restoring the lake is now much more feasible than in earlier times.

“Restoration of Lake Pedder will create world news and attract thousands of visitors, including scientists, as part of the United Nations’ Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, 2021-2030,” Christine told the lakeside gathering.

Restoration ecologist Dr Anita Wild described the stages of recovery at several sites around Strathgordon restored after the Hydro village had been dismantled decades ago.

Visiting United States Eco Health academic James Aronson told the gathering he was enthusiastic about the restoration of the lake and the positive health benefits for the community in seeing the Earth repaired instead of further degraded.

Over the past twelve months, more than four hundred people have donated to the Restore Pedder campaign to fund research to understand the impacts of ecological restoration and ensure species and the environment can thrive in a restored ecosystem, and that the energy from Pedder can be replaced with a renewable source.

“Not only is energy demand in Tasmania falling as major bulk consumers like Temco wind down, we now have the technology to replace any lost energy generation capacity with a renewable source and energy efficiency and at the same time, restore a globally unique ecosystem,” said Christine Milne. “We are thrilled that Adventure Clothing company Patagonia has become a financial sponsor of the campaign.”

Lake Pedder was infamously flooded in 1972 with enormous resistance from the community. The eventual flooding of Lake Pedder galvanised the community to save the Franklin, establish the Tasmanian World Heritage Wilderness Area and see the formation of the first political party focused on the protection of nature, The United Tasmania Group, that later became the Greens party.

“It was a spectacular place, it moved you inside,” shared Sue Hope in sharing her experience of going to the original Lake Pedder.

Dick Friend shared “I walked in over a weekend and it changed my life.”

A few facts on Lake Pedder:

- The protection provided by the Lake Pedder National Park status, granted in 1955, was revoked by the Tasmanian government in 1967.
- The volume of water that is sitting 15 metres above the original Lake Pedder is static and never used. It is only the top one metre that flows through the McParland Pass canal into Gordon. The other 14 metres of water only purpose is to elevate the impoundment level to flow into the pass.
- Lake Pedder’s flooding provides 4% of the state’s hydro-electric output. Temco uses more than 5% of the state’s power and has announced closure.
- In the context of alternative supply, a large wind farm such as is currently being built at Cattle Hill of 50 – 60 turbines would replace the electricity output.

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