

Talking Point: Calls to drain hydro dam to restore world's rarest beach

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Some big names have joined forces to propose a bold New Year's resolution to restore Lake Pedder and its inland beach, which were flooded 50 years ago to create a hydro dam.

"NEXT year, 2022, is the 50th year since the inundation of Lake Pedder, and the United Nations has declared the UN Decade 2021-2030 as the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Biodiversity loss is a global emergency. We need to protect and restore ecosystems to stem the sixth wave of extinction and to build resilience in landscapes in the face of accelerating global warming.

Lake Pedder, in the heart of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, is recognised for its outstanding universal values, and restoring Pedder is a perfect global flagship for the UN Decade.

Restoring Lake Pedder would give our universities a chance to engage in a global push for 30 per cent of the earth's surface to be protected or restored by 2030 and inspire a generation anxious about global ecosystem collapse.

Furthermore, the 57MW of energy it feeds into the Gordon Power scheme has been eclipsed by existing new wind farms, such that its restoration is no threat to Tasmania's energy security.

This is the perfect time for the federal and state governments to sign off on the restoration of Lake Pedder. Let's make 2022 the year we restore Lake Pedder."

Environmentalist Christine Milne AO is former leader of the Tasmania and Australia Greens.



An image of Lake Pedder from the Frankland Range, prior to its flooding.
Picture: Les Southwell

“THE flooding of Lake Pedder 50 years ago meant the once glittering jewel in the crown of Tasmania’s wilderness was seemingly lost forever.

But times change. As experience around the world has shown, we now know it’s possible to drain and restore flooded ecosystems.

For ecological, economic, and aesthetic reasons, it’s time Australia joined this growing global movement of removing unnecessary dams. Nowhere in the country would offer a more potent symbol of doing so than the restoration of beautiful Lake Pedder.

Let those white sands gleam again!”

James McCormack is the editor of WILD Magazine.

“I HAVE been obsessed with Lake Pedder since I was a school boy.

It always seemed to me the most beautiful place on earth.

That we now have an opportunity to bring it back simply blows my mind.

Tasmania has been on a roll of late, but this another level, it's a game changer.

The world would dream of seeing this ancient lake returned to its full dramatic glory.”

Rob Sitch, film maker and acclaimed TV and movie actor.



Gordon Dam near Lake Pedder, Strathgordon. Picture: Amanda Ducker

“FEW days pass when I don't think about the place that was once Lake Pedder. Almost 50 years ago in 1972, I walked the wide beach that framed this most beautiful lake in the world.

To flood this lake seemed unthinkable. To keep it flooded when the world is embracing renewable energy would compound mistakes made in 1972 to build the wrong hydro scheme.

The UN decade of eco-system restoration is meant to help undo damage to globally significant sites in recent decades caused by industrialisation and in some cases, war.

Play a role in history by supporting the global effort to restore Pedder.”

Peter Thompson is a former ABC AM and RN Breakfast presenter

“THE flooding of Lake Pedder was an act of environmental vandalism on a grand scale that never should have been allowed to happen.

Fortunately, we now have the knowledge and expertise to once and for all reverse this mess for the benefit of present and future generations.

Bringing the Restore Pedder project to fruition would send a powerful message to the Australian community, and indeed the wider world, about our commitment to reclaiming and rehabilitating our wildest places while also addressing the issue of intergenerational justice.

The opportunity to again walk on Lake Pedder’s magnificent shores is well within reach.”

Andrew Wilkie, federal independent Member for Clark



A plane on the beach of Lake Pedder in 1971.

“THE Green political movement should not forget its roots, and what better time than its 50th anniversary to get behind efforts to restore the iconic and rare white sandy wilderness beaches of Lake Pedder, whose loss still haunts us to this day.

Restoring Lake Pedder could be a net social, environmental and economic benefit to Tasmania and the world.

It’s an eminently doable project, of big hope, big optimism and big action that would also become powerfully symbolic, in a world that desperately needs such leadership.

Just the antidote we need!”

Peter Whish-Wilson, Greens senator for Tasmania.

“ECOSYSTEM restoration is an idea whose time has come.

We can break our habit of degrading and discarding the environment, and make peace with nature.

A harmonious relation between humans and nature is the best way to ensure our future as a global civilization into the 21st century.”

Tim Christopherson, head of the United Nations Nature for Climate Branch Ecosystems Division.