Vale Hilary Bennell

Champion Lake Pedder campaigner, Hilary Bennell has passed away.

After the shocking discovery of two malignant brain tumours, Hilary peacefully passed away last week, surrounded by family.

Until her last day, her greatest priority was the restoration of Lake Pedder. Hilary walked and guided through vast swathes of Tasmania’s most unique, remote wild places, and walked over the world, but she always considered Lake Pedder; “the most wonderful place I’d ever visited”.

Just weeks ago, on October 1st, Hilary was awarded Lake Pedder Restoration Inc life membership after many years as a committee member.

After pivotal teenage trips to Federation Peak, Mount Anne and viewing the magnificent pink quartzite beach, glimmering in the distance from peaks of South West Tasmania, it was in 1968 that Hilary first visited Lake Pedder; A trip that would set the course of her life’s greatest devotion.

As a teacher at Montrose Bay High School during the controversial flooding of Lake Pedder, Hilary had a classroom of Pedder posters and “naughty boys”. But after a talk from Wilderness Photographer and explorer, Olegas Truchanas, her class quickly learned the value of Lake Pedder, one day marching independently and unsupervised from the Montrose Bay School into Hobart, Parliament House, protesting the flooding.

In 1993, new submersible technology showed that the Lake Pedder beach remained intact below the impoundment waters. This evidence cemented Hilary and many others’ unshakeable belief that Lake Pedder could, and would one day, be restored. Beside lifelong friend and fellow activist Helen Gee, Hilary convened the Pedder 2000 campaign. Successfully they initiated a 1995 Federal inquiry into the restoration of Lake Pedder, ultimately concluding it is technically feasible.

The Lake Pedder Restoration Inc, will continue to fight with great determination to restore Lake Pedder, inspired as we are by Hilary, who ardently believed that Pedder would be restored sometime between 2020-2030.

A window of opportunity has opened with this decade 2021-2030 having been declared by the United Nations as the decade on ecosystem restoration. The Edgar and Scott’s Peak dams impounding Pedder, which are built upon a fault line are now designated high risk. They require millions of dollars to bring them up to contemporary safety standards, money which should be more sensibly invested in restoring Lake Pedder.

Please feel free to use the image attached and for further comment please contact campaign director Tabatha Badger on 0448 812 281 or at LakePedder.org@gmail.com

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