

ALL THAT DISAPPEARS WILL EVENTUALLY RESURFACE

# Lake Pedder



I climbed the Franklands, and looking  
down thought, 'I'll never see this again'.  
It began to snow lightly, and I wept.

— Leigh Holloway, student, c1972



big change, high ground, **restore pedder**

The day will come when  
our children will undo what we  
have so foolishly done.

— Edward St John QC, 1973



Lake Pedder was a spectacular part of a dynamic living waterway in the heart of Tasmania's southwest wilderness area. It was declared a National Park in 1955. But its protected National Park status was revoked by the Tasmanian Government in 1967 for the sole purpose of Hydro Electric development. Lake Pedder was then flooded by the Huon-Serpentine impoundment in 1972.

The original lake is not forgotten. It lies quietly waiting, just 15 metres beneath the dark, brooding body of dead water still officially gazetted as Lake Pedder.

With the United Nations declaring 2021-30 the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, what a demonstration of leadership to the world it would be for Tasmania to embark on one of the largest ecological restorations on the planet. By removing the dams, Lake Pedder would re-emerge. The plan to restore Lake Pedder is courageous and visionary.

And it is possible.

Lake Pedder

In the summer of 2021-2022 it will be 50 years since Lake Pedder was inundated. This jewel of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, with its iconic wide, pink quartzite beach was swallowed up along with the more than 242 square kilometres of Tasmania's wilderness that was drowned.

The loss of Lake Pedder has been described as 'a loss of epic proportions... a global ecological tragedy'. It is not surprising then that talk of Pedder's restoration continues to reverberate both here in Tasmania, and increasingly in this critical moment in time that has been declared by the United Nations as the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Commitment to Lake Pedder's restoration remains steadfast among those who led the original charge and those who dare to dream.

## THE ART OF IMAGINING

The art and imagery created at the time continues to capture our imagination and the campaign to restore Lake Pedder is a powerful symbol of hope in increasingly troubling times. Pivotal among the artists were the watercolourists known as *The Sunday Painters* with Max Angus, Patricia Giles, Harry Buckie, Roy Cox and Elspeth Vaughan perhaps the best known. Of the photographers Olegas Truchanas moved many to tears with his sublime audio-visual presentations screened at the Hobart Town Hall. Some of the images were later published in Max Angus' tribute *The World of Olegas Truchanas*.

Photographer David Neilson (front cover image), has continued to inspire support for wild places in Tasmania and around the world for over 50 years. We remain indebted to those committed artist/activists because their imagery continues to galvanise our determination to shift the national conversation. The images will in the end also make all the difference to the restoration effort. The power of art and photography is well documented.

Peter Dombrovskis' most famous photograph, *Rock Island Bend*, was the iconic image of the campaign to stop Tasmania's Hydro-Electric Commission repeating history and damming the Franklin River.

Left to right:  
Olegas Truchanas, 1971  
Image: Ralph Hope-Johnstone

Elspeth Vaughan, 1970  
Image: Jack Thwaites

Patricia Giles  
Image: Ray Davey

David Neilson, 1971  
Image: Jenny Scott



Frankland Range, highlighting the Citadel and Coronation Peak at Lake Pedder, Tasmania, c1967 Image: Olegas Truchanas

Max Angus at work on the beach at Lake Pedder Image: Patricia Giles

Inset: Max Angus watercolour, *Early Lake Pedder*, 1953 Patricia Giles Collection

## RESTORE LAKE PEDDER – A WATERSHED MOMENT

This panorama has been created from a series of 13 aerial photographs, taken on 14 May 1972.

It captures the commencement of the inundation of more than 242 square kilometres of the Serpentine Valley and southwest wilderness. Lake Pedder sits helplessly in the path of the expanding impoundment waters.



SERPENTINE DAM

**impound**, seize, hold back

**restore**, bring back, return

**RESTORE LAKE PEDDER – A WATERSHED MOMENT**

This panorama has been created from a series of 13 aerial photographs, taken on 14 May 1972.

It captures the commencement of the inundation of more than 242 square kilometres of the Serpentine Valley and southwest wilderness. Lake Pedder sits helplessly in the path of the expanding impoundment waters.

The Serpentine Dam (seen at left) resulted in the impounded waters of the Serpentine River flowing back inexorably along its course, eventually breaking its banks and engulfing the valley on its way to submerging the original Lake Pedder under 15 metres of dam waters.

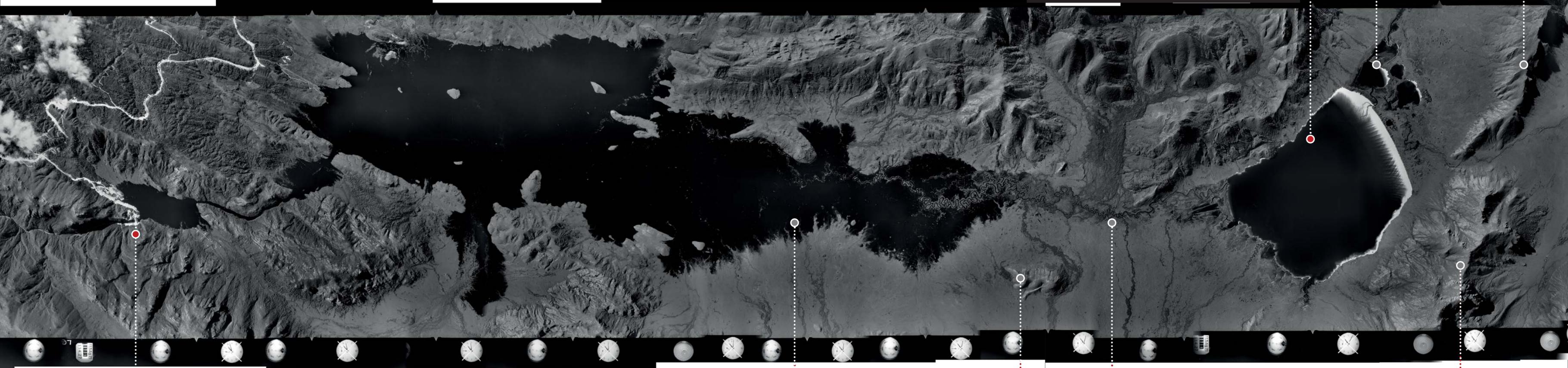
With community support, political will and careful environmental management, this process can just as surely happen in reverse.

Removing the Serpentine, Edgar and Scotts Peak Dams and draining the impoundment waters would be a watershed moment in environmental restoration.

Re-establishing the natural course of the Serpentine River and once again revealing the unrivalled beauty of the original Lake Pedder, can be done.

Restoring Pedder is the perfect Australian flagship project for this United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 that we are now in.

Film 603, Frames 96–108 Images: Courtesy of TASMAP (www.tasmap.tas.gov.au) © State of Tasmania



SERPENTINE DAM

SERPENTINE VALLEY

THE CRUMPLEDOWN

SERPENTINE RIVER

THE FRANKLAND RANGE

LAKE PEDDER

MARIA LAKES

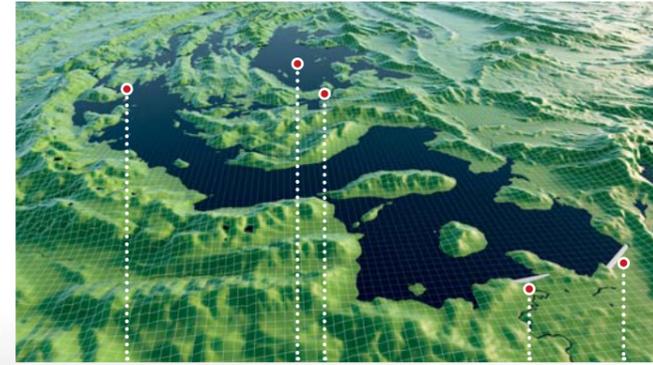
MT SOLITARY

**BEFORE THE INUNDATION**  
 In the heart of Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area lies Lake Pedder. This unique glacial outwash lake was a globally renowned scenic and ecological icon.



Serpentine Valley  
 Frankland Range  
 Lake Pedder  
 Lake Gordon  
 Mt Solitary

**AFTER THE INUNDATION**  
 Huon-Serpentine impoundment full after Serpentine, Edgar and Scotts Peak Dams on the Huon River were closed. The distance from the Serpentine Dam to Scotts Peak Dam is 39 kilometres. The surface area of the impoundment is 242 square kilometres. McPartlan Pass Canal provides gravity-fed water from the impoundment to Lake Gordon.



Serpentine Dam  
 McPartlan Pass Canal  
 Lake Gordon  
 Scotts Peak Dam  
 Edgar Dam

**THE ENGINEERING TASK**  
 The impoundment water can be released into the Serpentine and Huon Rivers via the Serpentine Dam's gated outlet and the Edgar Dam's riparian outlets. A control valve can be fitted into the concrete plug of the existing Scotts Peak Dam diversion tunnel or water could be siphoned out over the dam itself.

The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration aims to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean.

The 50-year anniversary of the inundation of Lake Pedder coincides with the start of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030.

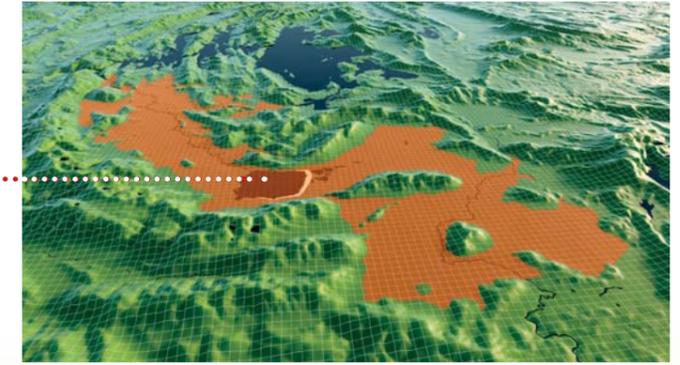
We are now in a critical ten-year window, a time in which humanity must meet the challenge of restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems in order to halt the devastating effects of climate change and the accelerating loss of biodiversity. Restoring Pedder is the perfect Australian flagship project for this coming United Nations decade.

Globally, wetland ecosystems are among the most threatened life support systems on the planet. Draining the impoundment and restoring the Serpentine Valley would be a significant contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of restoring 20% of the world's fresh water systems by 2050.

The argument that Tasmania needs the 495GWh per annum of energy generated from the Huon-Serpentine impoundment for its energy security is wrong. The new Cattle Hill and Granville Harbour wind farms together produced 767GWh in 2020-2021, which is 154% of the energy from the impoundment.

We have an obligation to our future generations and the world to right the wrongs of the past and take the necessary steps toward restoration.

**RESTORATION**  
 The area of land requiring restoration is shown in brown. Lake Pedder will emerge quite quickly once the draining process begins as the impoundment is only 15 metres deep.



ORIGINAL LAKE PEDDER SITE



## SCIENTIFICALLY SUPPORTED

Dam removal is on the rise globally and is an important approach for river management, restoration and environmental conservation.

In the past it was unthinkable that you could remove a dam. Today there is an evolution in attitudes from, pride in big dams as engineering wonders, to the growing awareness that our future is bound to the life and health of wild rivers and ecosystems.

As new renewable energy technologies come on stream, hydro-electric dams like coal-fired power plants, are increasingly becoming 'an idea eclipsed by progress'.

It is now time to restore the heart of the southwest wilderness. Ecological, economic and social benefits will flow.

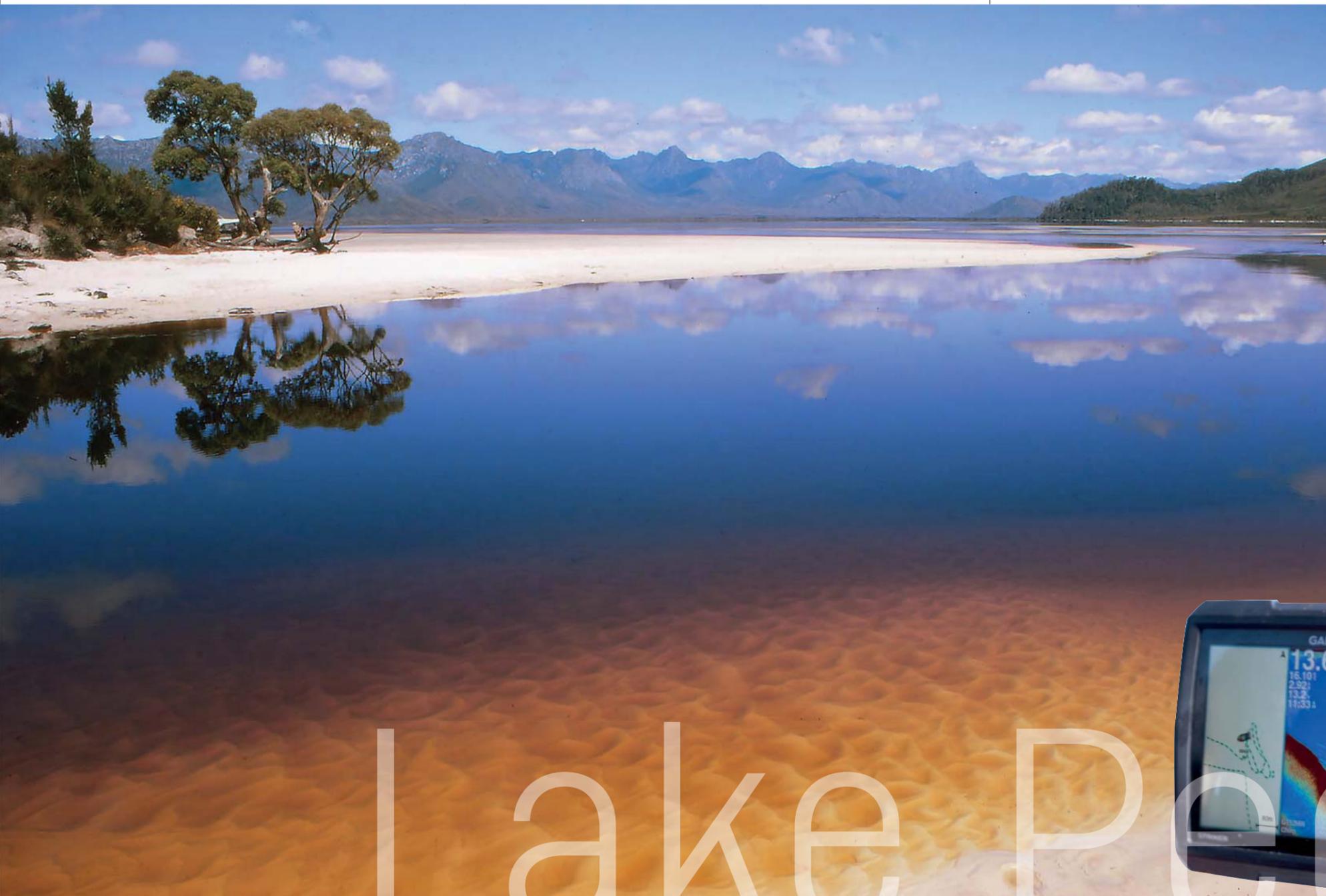
A 2020 ecological study commissioned by the Restore Lake Pedder Committee and undertaken by specialist Restoration Ecologist Dr Anita Wild, documents the biodiversity outcomes.

There will be an increase in the extent of critical habitat for platypus, threatened flora species and vegetation communities. Dune buttercup (rare), Pedder bristlewort (endangered) and Shortleaf Milligania (rare) will enjoy an extended habitat niche.

The four threatened vegetation communities that were flooded: *Banksia marginata* wet scrub, alkaline pans, freshwater aquatic herbland and freshwater aquatic sedgeland and rushland, will have the opportunity to re-establish. This ecosystem repair will strengthen the existing values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

The impoundment that inundated Lake Pedder meets a maximum of 5% of Tasmania's energy demand. Already the new wind farms of Cattle Hill and Granville

Harbour generate 54% more energy than that. Like all constructed things dams have a finite lifetime. Fifty years on the Edgar and Scotts Peak Dams are coming to the end of their life span. The \$65 million dollars in maintenance that needs to be spent in the coming four years can be better directed toward alternative more efficient and less destructive sources of energy and on the restoration project itself.



Pedder bristlewort  
(*Centrolepis pedderensis*)  
Image: Richard Schahinger



Shortleaf Milligania  
(*Milligania johnstonii*)  
Image: Rob Wiltshire



**Pedder pennies (above)** are a unique geological specimen formed like a pebble in the shape of a penny. They have a quartzite centre with an iron and manganese coated rim.

Using a submersible (ROV) a team gathered footage that showed the condition of the original Lake Pedder beach under the impoundment waters (at left). The iconic pink quartzite beach is still there under less than a few millimetres of sediment. The underlying geology is unchanged. The defined beach edge is still there. The dune system is still there. The trees are still there holding it all together with their roots.



Submersible depth soundings Image: Andy Szollosi

Lake Pedder beach Image: Graham Wootton

Pedder pennies Image: National Museum of Australia

Save Lake Pedder activists standing defiantly on the beach during the last summer of 1972, before the dam waters submerged the lake.  
L-R: Dave Elliott, Kevin Kiernan, Sue Forrester, John Brownlie and David Neilson



They may say we are dreamers...

The inundation of Lake Pedder in southwest Tasmania stands as a pivotal event in the evolution of environmental awareness throughout Australia. The fight against the flooding of Lake Pedder, although unsuccessful, led to the formation of the United Tasmania Group in 1972, the world's first Green Party. This new ethic to put the environment at the heart of politics, inspired generations of activists and spread globally.

In 1983 the campaign to save the Franklin River from a similar fate was won and widely celebrated as a new beginning. Today there are Green Parties in over 90 countries in the world and this new politics all started with Lake Pedder. Importantly a new generation of climate aware campaigners has joined the call for Lake Pedder's restoration. The time has come for Lake Pedder to once again be the inspiration for a worldwide movement.

The great thing about restoration is that it is a healing process for the Earth and for people. In fact it brings people together, it creates local employment, it inspires community, and it delivers a sense of victory, accomplishment and hope.

As the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration dawns, hear the call and join the growing global community looking to make a positive, tangible difference.

We need to protect what is left and restore what is degraded. We didn't save Lake Pedder the first time around. But we never gave up.

I look forward to the day when I will walk onto the beach of a restored Lake Pedder and put back the jar of sand and the unique Pedder pennies that I have held in trust for those who did not live long enough to see that day. They never stopped believing it would happen and neither should we.

Christine Milne, 2021





## PEOPLE POWER!

Environmental campaigns are only ever won with community support. But to build that support we need your help. We are asking you to become a donor towards restoring the heart of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and by doing so become a champion for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Join us and help make the restoration of Lake Pedder Australia's flagship project in the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Together we can bring Pedder back!

Visit [LakePedder.org](http://LakePedder.org) to join up, donate and subscribe to our newsletter. Our website also has a wide range of further information and resources.

## CONTACT US

If you would like to talk about how you can support the restoration of Lake Pedder, please do reach out to us at: [restoration@lakepedder.org](mailto:restoration@lakepedder.org)  
[lakepedder.org](http://lakepedder.org)

Follow us on social media @RestorePedder



Lake Pedder Restoration Inc.  
PO Box 4694  
Bathurst Street PO  
Hobart Tasmania Australia 7000

