

Speech by Courtney Wise, student aged 16, at the launch of Max Angus' book *Pedder: The Story. The Paintings*, Fullers Bookshop Hobart, 2 November 2008.

Although the tragedy of the original Lake Pedder happened long before I was born, this does not mean that I do not understand the true worth of such a beautiful place. Max Angus' book is not just a capture of times gone by but is also a doorway to what the future could hold if we choose to take that door. I plan to push through that door, with great strength and perseverance.

Nothing is more tragic to see than drowned mountains, something about the 'New Lake Pedder' just doesn't seem to fit. The mountains are shaped as though they are stooped in sorrow. Never have I seen such foul coloured water and no matter how much special landscaping or photo editing it could never mask the large concrete structures and false waterlines.

The government may see the restoration of Lake Pedder as an impossible task, but as quoted many times before 'impossible is a word only found in the dictionary of fools.' Does our government really want to be seen as a fool? Or can they see past their pride and work towards this restoration with us? I put a question to those in power:

How many, if any of you, have ever had more than a momentary glance at the 'New Lake Pedder' through a car or hotel window? How many have noticed the receding waterlines, copper coloured waters and drowning of the once majestic mountains of the area?

Max wrote in his Lake Pedder Enquiry Submission:

"In a world where the pressure of progress and the overspecialisation of our educational systems has fragmented our philosophies, the most capable and sincere men may be led into making judgments that only in the future will be seen to be the tragic blunders they were."

Who in a position of political power will have the insight to admit this? Who will be brave and bold enough to take the first step towards this restoration? Who will have the foresight, the wisdom, the guts? Will you Mr Bartlett? Would you Mr Hodgman? Soon I will be able to vote, who will represent mine and others from my generation's view?

Max Angus stated himself during and after the fight for Lake Pedder that 'We were trodden underfoot because we were idealistic.' Today is now the time of ideals. It is no longer unusual to be idealistic. The ideals for the restoration of Lake Pedder still remain after almost 40 years; now is the time to reach forward and make them, no longer ideals but achievements.

As stated in Lake Pedder by Bob Brown:

"If history pleases and we overcome the present troubles, the world's people will be working together to restore some of the earth's natural places from the ravages of the 20th Century."

This was no idle dream. In 1974 the Australian Government's Lake Pedder Committee of Enquiry reported:

"If Lake Pedder were to be re-exposed, its beauty would return irrespective of the time the lake had been flooded."

Later in 1995, the Australian Government House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts stated that "Technically it is feasible to drain the present impoundment and restore the original lake."

Well, history does please and now is the time to act and I plan to work to make this so. There is no reason for this task to keep the untrue 'impossible' air about it. It can be done and **will** be done.

Max Angus has been there throughout the ups and downs of the Lake Pedder campaign. He himself said:

"No description, however detailed, could remotely convey the sense of awe and wonder felt by those who saw this magic place ..."

Imagine if my generation and others after it could experience that awe and wonder. Wouldn't it be so rewarding looking into the eyes of those around us and knowing that we have been a part of restoring such a great region of Tasmania's wilderness.

As said by Greg Buckman in Tasmania's Wilderness Battles, "Lake Pedder was the jewel of Tasmania's south-west wilderness."

People who never saw the Old Lake Pedder might say the same about the New Lake, but I unlike them wish to see the Old Lake Pedder. Any picture no matter how faded and colourless still looks more amazing and breathtaking than the real image of Lake Pedder. As Bob Brown stated:

"It seems a small price to pay to show that our generation is not only capable of massively changing the environment when it needs to, but can also accept the challenge of restoring it to its former beauty."

There is no better way to put it. I am the start of this generation that **will** do so and I plan to be at the front leading the pack.

Max states in this magnificent book:

“Our pioneer forefathers went without much to build a nation for us to enjoy. Can’t we tighten our own belts a little? Does it not seem reasonable that we should do the same for our sons, our grandsons, and theirs?”

I too say, Why not? No matter how great an artist Max Angus is, no matter how much he captures the spirit and aesthetics of Lake Pedder, no matter how many fading photos represent the magic of the Lake, my generation would have liked to inherit the Lake not just the images and maybe the next one will. So thank you for the book Max – it is truly inspirational.