

Ladies and Gentlemen, Welcome and thank you for joining us this evening.

My name is Peter Fagan and I am the NSW Representative of the Lake Pedder Restoration Committee.

Some of you are already aware that Senator Bob Brown cannot join us tonight, but I understand others are not. On behalf of the committee I apologise for his absence.

The votes of the Greens senators are crucial to the current business of Senate and Bob has had to remain in Canberra.

Earlier in the week there was some hope that events would draw to a conclusion by this morning and he would be able to join us. However with two sitting days lost due to the tragic events in Victoria this has not been possible and he has had to withdraw.

Regarding the events in Victoria, I know there are many Tasmanians here, some of whom would remember the terrible fires of 1967 in Southern Tasmania in which 70 lives were lost.

I am sure everyone here has an appreciation of the disaster that has occurred and has the deepest sympathy for the victims.

Bob is very disappointed that he cannot be here and has asked me to read the following message to you:

“It is with great regret that I cannot be there tonight to help launch Max's outstanding tribute to the original Lake Pedder.

Unfortunately, I will be in the Senate debating the intricacies of the economic stimulus package rather than helping you all thank Max for keeping the spirit and memory of Lake Pedder alive.

The campaign to save Lake Pedder galvanised Tasmanians like no other issue before.

Those tenacious advocates for Tasmania's superb wilderness areas established the conservation movement in Australia as we know it, and we can never stop thanking them for their dedication.

And it's not too late to return Lake Pedder to what it once was.

Take a look at Max's paintings of the area's delicate beauty and remember that all it takes is political will to restore this jewel to Tasmania's crown.”

In the place of Bob, Helen Gee has kindly agreed to join the panel and I will introduce her to you in a few moments.

We are gathered to discover a beautiful book that eulogises the incomparable beauty of Lake Pedder.

This is also an opportunity, not to be missed, to remind you that the struggle to restore Lake Pedder goes on and is a profoundly relevant one.

The French philosopher and historian Ernest Renan said that the French Revolution was the suicide of France.

Similarly it can truly be said that the flooding of Lake Pedder was the suicide of Tasmania. The consensus of our community was destroyed.

The flooding of Pedder taught us that those who care about Tasmania's heritage cannot trust the economic and political elites to protect it.

And it taught those elites that they cannot assume that what they thought worth ignoring or protecting yesterday can be destroyed tomorrow, should it offer an opportunity for short term economic gain.

With Pedder, these battle lines were drawn and they remain in place, nearly forty years later.

Our conflicts and our anguish over environmental issues grumble on unrelentingly.

They impose great stress on our society, sully our politics, sap our confidence and tarnish our reputation.

As a result, Tasmania today is **THE MOST DIVIDED state** community in Australia;

and that division will NOT end until the mistake of Pedder and mistakes of the same character being made today in the forestry and pulp mill issues are properly addressed.

Some of you may be wondering why the Lake Pedder Restoration Committee pursues its struggle to restore the Lake.

Are there NOT things NOT yet destroyed that we ought to focus on?

Is not our quest a quixotic and unrealistic one?

Please understand two important points:

Firstly, Lake Pedder is NOT irretrievably destroyed. The lake CAN be restored.

While hidden from us today, Lake Pedder is, if you like, the Sleeping Beauty of the Tasmanian landscape.

If we find the courage and the will to invest the money and do the work, we can wake her from her sleep.

If we don't, she will remain, not dead but asleep, and she will continue to trouble our consciences, to be a cause of denial, shame, grief and frustration, as she has since 1972.

Secondly, a restored Lake Pedder offers Tasmania, and Australia, **GREAT AND QUANTIFIABLE** benefits.

I suggest to you that the restored Lake's status as a landmark and focus of interest will be comparable to that of the Kimberley or Uluru.

The acclaim and respect restoration would bring to our state and our nation would be of the highest value.

The restoration of Lake Pedder is Tasmania's MOST PROMISING potential infrastructure project – a powerful generator of work, wealth, goodwill and creativity.

The Lake Pedder Restoration Committee is working with vigour to make it possible for all of us and our children – ESPECIALLY OUR CHILDREN – to see with their own eyes, touch with their own feet, what today we can only experience through Max's remarkable paintings.

I urge you all to consider joining our organisation and contributing as you are best able to its work.

Helen Gee has been for many years a key contributor to the Lake Pedder Restoration Committee.

It was Helen who originally suggested to Max that he write the book, and we thank her for that marvellous idea.

Besides this, she is forever active on logging and other conservation issues in Tasmania, regardless of the cost, strain and effort.

I noted with delight recently that Helen, as one of the Gunns 20, was awarded costs of \$17,500 in the Victorian Supreme Court against Gunns Limited as that action drew towards closure.

Helen is also a Councillor of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

I will now hand over to Peter [Thompson] and our panel, who I would like to thank, on behalf of the Pedder Committee, for agreeing to participate tonight.

Thank you

[Peter Fagan]