



Reflections

The Journal of the *Lake Pedder* Restoration Committee

The Basslink issue

Basslink Report Released

On Tuesday 12 March 2002 the Joint Assessment Panel (JAP) released its draft report on the Basslink proposal. The JAP has the task of assessing the project and making recommendations to the Tasmanian, Victorian and Commonwealth governments. They sum up their recommendations at page 13 of the report:

'The Panel recommends that the Commonwealth, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments approve the proposed Basslink interconnector subject to recommendations and conditions summarised in Chapter 9.'

There are 21 draft recommendations and zero 'conditions' in Chapter 9. Most of the 'recommendations' relate to

planning issues. There is ample window-dressing in the form of recommendations for monitoring and environmental management. The JAP have only deviated from the wishes of BPL by recommending: 'against a monopole configuration in the absence of an agreement between BPL and the owners of corrosion-affected infrastructure'.

Further recommendations include that a titanium mesh anode be used instead

of a graphite/coke anode subject to BPL's further submissions; that slightly more cable be undergrounded in Victoria and an alternative route to that favoured by the company be used; in regard to Lake Pedder the Panel said that 'restoration of Lake Pedder is a separate issue beyond the scope of this assessment' (8.2.7.2).

The Panel rejected the Hydro's claims that Basslink would have no net

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Commemorative Walk and Time Capsule

On 27-28 April 2002 some members of the Victorian branch of Pedder 2000 will walk the route taken 30 years ago by those on the final pilgrimage to Lake Pedder.

The walk will follow the old track over the Coronets until it reaches the shore of the Huon-Serpentine Impoundment. 'Messages to the future' and personal items from members of the public will be passed to a group who have travelled to the flooded Lake Pedder by boat. These items and letters will be placed in a watertight vessel and taken by a SCUBA diver to the beach of Lake Pedder. The capsule will also contain newspapers and other memorabilia.

The time capsule will remain in place until the Huon-Serpentine Impoundment is drained. Our hope is the capsule will remain in place as a reminder of the flooding, long after the lake is restored.

Pedder 2000 is calling for messages and small objects to put into the time capsule. All messages should have the writers' full personal details so they can be traced when the capsule is recovered. A brief description of the significance of the object should also accompany all objects. Please send these items by last post on 20 April 2002, to:
Pedder 2000

109 Leicester St, Fitzroy 3065
Phone: 9415 6038 (Barnaby Hume and Lucy Monie)

Items may be able to be collected— phone one of the numbers below for more details.

If you wish be more involved or have expertise with equipment that may be of use, please call:
Stephen Curtain: 0409 606 393
Adam Beeson: 0428 217 707.

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**Pedder
2000**

Basslink and Pedder

By Barnaby Hume

I feel a great sense of regret for what was lost when Lake Pedder was flooded, even though I only know the lake through the photos and accounts of those fortunate enough to have seen it as it was. My impressions of the time of the flooding—obtained second- and third-hand and after 30 years have passed—may be very different from those of people who were involved but it seems that the sadness and anger in the community are not only because of what was done but because of the way that the Tasmanian government went about the decision-making process.

Initial plans for the Pedder-Gordon hydro scheme were made quietly, virtually in secret. The project was then announced as a done deal before its merits had been publicly debated. It seems that the government of the time had simply decided that a large-scale power generation project was required and then pushed the project through despite significant public opposition.

Unfortunately, the current process for evaluating the proposed Basslink Tasmania-to-Victoria power cable appears to be following the traditional model.

Whether or not Basslink is of benefit to Tasmanians and Victorians, and whether it should go ahead needs to be debated publicly. Basslink may not

projects with potential for significant social and environmental impact.

So what is Basslink? It is a proposal that a private company, National Grid International Ltd (NGIL), construct a power cable across the Tasmanian and Victorian countryside and underneath Bass Strait.

The idea does have some advantages. Hydro power can be quickly turned on and off, and Victoria is demanding extra power to help meet peak demand. Tasmania's hydro-based power system is currently susceptible to electricity shortages during

droughts. A further incentive for the Tasmanian government is that access to the mainland power market would make the Hydro Electric Commission a much more valuable asset for privatisation.

Does Tasmania actually need Basslink? The undersea pipeline (not to be confused with the cable) to deliver Victorian natural gas to Tasmania and the upgrading of the Bell Bay gas-fired power station will provide effective 'drought-proofing', if required. Combined with a proposed 135 mw wind-energy farm in the north, this will effectively double Tasmania's existing generation capacity, providing sufficient power reserves.

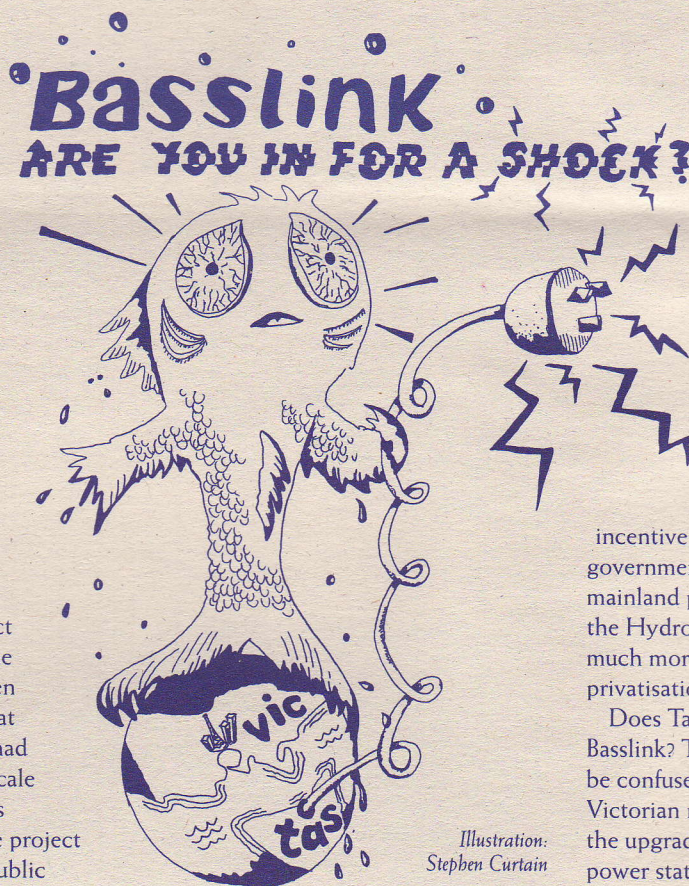


Illustration:
Stephen Curtain

have the same emotional impact as the flooding of Pedder did thirty years ago but the underlying issues are the same. The community should have a say in the way their governments manage

Basslink Report Released

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effect on the World Heritage area. Overall they appear to conclude that Basslink will not have a significant effect on the World Heritage values of the area. Overall, the Panel has accepted completely the Hydro's view that Basslink will not have a significant environmental impact, given the damage mitigation measures proposed.

On a darkly humorous note, the JAP's approach to assessing alternatives is worthy of observation: in essence they say that although there may be better alternatives to achieve Basslink's

stated objectives, Basslink should go ahead if its environmental, social and economic impacts are acceptable. In other words, 'we'll take second best'.

The panel has ignored the majority of submissions. The majority of submissions opposed the proposal and/or recommended it go underground in Victoria and be a bipolar configuration. It appears the Panel is a rubber stamp—the writer was told by an employee of the Hydro that work had begun at various power stations in preparation for Basslink.

The report can be viewed at: www.rpdc.tas.gov.au/projects_state_signif/Basslink/index.htm

The JAP will accept submissions on the Draft Report. Submissions must be received no later than 4:30 pm on Tuesday 16 April 2002.

Send submissions to:
Basslink Joint Advisory Panel
c/-GPO Box 2036, Hobart TAS 7001
3rd Floor, TGIO Building,
144 Macquarie Street, Hobart TAS 7000
Email: enquiry@rpdc.tas.gov.au

Or
c/-Department of Infrastructure
Traralgon Office, 120 Kay Street
Traralgon VIC 3844
Email: basslink.iias@doi.vic.gov.au

ADAM BEESON

Living Rivers



Helen Gee (seated, left) beside Pedder supporters as Annabel Richards (at right) holds the 'Living Rivers' banner. A Gyuto monk prays for the original Lake Pedder beneath the temporary waters of 'Fake Pedder'. The mood was reflective and very moving. Nikki Richards kneels, far right. Scotts Peak Dam, Tasmania. Photos: Stephen Curtain



In a symbol of unity and community, Pedder supporters clasped a giant strip of material encircling the Gyuto monk, in prayer, with more Pedder supporters. Scotts Peak Dam, March 2000, Tasmania.

The river is a powerful symbol of life and the now annual, international Living Rivers Day (14 March) aims to promote the significance of healthy rivers from catchment to the sea. The theme 'Living Rivers' encompasses our hopes and visions for restoration and healing the relationships between the human community to the environment. The aim of annual events around the globe is to build awareness of existing work in eco-restoration.

People are increasingly conscious of the need for ecological restoration. At the sixth World Wilderness Congress recently the United Nations was called upon to declare the twenty-first century 'the century for restoring the earth'—to counter the negative perceptions of the future prospects for our planet.

The first Australian Festival for Living Rivers was held in March 2000 in Hobart, Tasmania, 'to celebrate the river as a powerful symbol of water and life'.

Thousands of people communed with the Gyuto monks, listened to informative talks about the troubles with dams on the Mekong River, danced and listened to concerts. Others were inspired by the photographic exhibition, went on field trips, watched audio-visuals,

remembered the Franklin and otherwise celebrated rivers and expressed hope for their future.

The festival presented speakers with connections to river rehabilitation. They spoke about local problems—in Tasmania the heavily polluted Derwent River and estuary, the Prosser River and Huon River changed by forestry, clearing and silt sedimentation. The speakers provided insights into the problems facing the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The plans of the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission for Basslink were laid bare—linking Tasmanian power to Victoria's electricity grid through Bass Strait which implies future 'river modifications', for Tasmania and visual tributes were made to rivers in danger.

During the festival the Tibetan Gyuto monks created a sand mandala then dissolved it into the Derwent River with a blessing ceremony for the river. 'Tasmanian Wild Rivers' was the theme for a superb photographic exhibition honouring our wild rivers. The ten days of celebration and concern ended with a 'kirtan' at the Springs site high on the slopes of Mt Wellington—an evening of music and singing at full-moon rise, looking across the city of Hobart and the Derwent River.

Dam failure?

By Sam Taylor

In January 2001, a tremor measuring 3.2 on the Richter scale near Lake Pedder compelled the Hydro Electric Commission to send its dam surveillance unit to check for damage. Thankfully for the Hydro and the people living downstream in the Huon valley, damage was negligible. The epicentre of the earthquake is believed to be near the Lake Edgar fault, which runs adjacent to the Lake Edgar dam, one of three dams built to create the new Lake Pedder.

The tremor, recorded by the Tasmanian Seismic Net at the University of Tasmania, raised questions over the ability of the dam to cope with stresses associated with seismic activity. Andrew Pattle the Dam Safety Manager from Hydro Tasmania, is confident that the eventuality of the Edgar dam being destroyed by an earthquake is an extremely remote possibility.

'A good guide to seismic resistance of a dam is to examine the performance of dams in countries that have experienced large earthquakes, such as Japan, California and New Zealand. Numerous earthquakes in these countries have shown that well engineered dams, such as Edgar, are inherently robust structures and represent a negligible risk.'

Geophysicist Dr Michael Roach from the University of Tasmania agrees that the possibility of the collapse of the dam is remote. 'There's no real likelihood of a catastrophic failure of the Edgar dam', he said.

The Lake Edgar fault was confirmed as an earthquake fault, caused by thrust due to compression, by a team from the Seismology Research Centre at RMIT in 1994. A scarp about two metres high marks the location of the fault and is visible from the road built during the construction of the dams in the area. The fault has been traced for at least 25 kilometres south of the dam.

Dr Roach says the Edgar fault is active in geological terms. 'What we know for certain is that the Lake Edgar fault has moved since the last glaciation... at least several times in the last 7000 years there have been earthquakes large enough to cause surface rupture'.

Determining the size of the earthquake or earthquakes that created the scarp is a difficult task as many factors may have had some bearing on the present appearance of the feature.

'Being realistic you could probably say somewhere in the region between 6-7.5 [on the Richter scale] would be a more conservative guess but between 6.5-7 would probably be a more reasonable guess for the size of earthquakes on that fault in the past', said Dr Roach.

The construction of dams in Greece, Albania and India has been identified as a contributing factor to the frequency of seismic events. 'Changing the stress regime by piling more water on top and also changing the hydrology... if you have a fault already existing (in place) and you lubricate that fault by the passage of ground water down to the fault, then the fault may potentially slide more readily.

'You're not going to induce a large earthquake unless there's already some sort of propensity to have an earthquake there anyway', said Dr Roach.

Helen Gee, coordinator of the Pedder 2000 campaign to drain and restore Lake Pedder, considers the background research carried out by the Hydro into the full seismic implications of the impoundment to have been insufficient.

'There was no independent assessment of the environmental impact of the scheme on the area. There was only one study commissioned but this was by the HEC who were preparing the proposal to destroy Lake Pedder. At no stage were conservationists invited to assist the commission in the early phases of planning the scheme.

'To us it wasn't sound practice to build a dam on a fault line', she said.

The potential for damage to the Edgar dam and subsequent flooding due to seismic activity along the Lake Edgar fault seems remote due to the infrequent nature of earthquakes large enough to cause such damage.

Although there is evidence of earthquakes of this magnitude occurring on the Lake Edgar fault line in the relatively recent past, Dr Roach considers the consequences of such an earthquake would have much wider implications.

'If we had a magnitude 7 earthquake at a distance of 80 kilometres or so as

the crow flies [to the Lake Edgar fault] we would see significant damage within portions of Hobart', he said.

Andrew Pattle concurs that the risks associated with the Edgar dam are negligible when compared with other potential effects of a large earthquake but Helen Gee is not convinced.

'I doubt that they [the Hydro] really know. Maybe they're right but the fact that they say it won't [fail], is the old style 'It's not going to happen'.

'The bottom line is we don't know.'

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Pedder 2000 Victorian Branch Studies and books available (October 2001)

Lake Pedder Study Group Publications

Why Lake Pedder Should be Restored — Mosley (1994) \$5.00 (postage \$2.50)

How Lake Pedder Can be Restored — Mosley (1994) \$5.00 (postage \$2.50)

Lake Pedder: A World Heritage Place to Cherish and Enjoy, Future management — Mosley (1995) \$20.00 (postage included)*

Lake Pedder: A Geophysical Survey — Tyler (1993) \$5.00 (postage \$2.50)

Some Biological Consequences of the Flooding of Lake Pedder — Tyler (1993) \$5.00 (postage included)*

The Geomorphology of Lake Pedder — Kiernan

The Geoconservation Significance of Lake Pedder and its Contribution to Geodiversity — Kiernan

Restoring Lake Pedder: a Geomorphological Perspective on Recovery Prospects and Likely Time Scales — Kiernan set of three \$20.00 (postage included)*

Lake Pedder Economic Study (Volumes I and II) — Kohl (1994) \$20.00 for the set (postage included)

Energy Summary — Blakers (1994) \$5.00 (postage included)*

Wilderness Society Publications

Still Overpowering Tasmania, a research report on the HEC's power forecasts from 1967 to 1993 — Burton (1994) \$20.00 (including postage)*

Books

Lake Pedder, Why a National Park must be saved — Dick Johnson (1972) \$5.00 soft cover (postage \$2.50)

The World of Olegas Truchanas — now out of print \$80.00 hardcover (postage and packing \$10.00)

Reflections — issue 8 March 2000 (also some back issues available on request) \$2.00 (postage \$1)

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