



# The Great Barrier Reef—The Commonwealth Government Role

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**The  
Great Barrier  
Reef-The  
Commonwealth  
Government  
Role**

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Ribbon Reef off Cooktown

*Photograph courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef Marine  
Park Authority.*





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# Introduction

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## **The Great Barrier Reef: physical characteristics**

The Great Barrier Reef is situated on the continental shelf of north-east Australia. The Reef extends for more than 2000 kilometres from just south of the Tropic of Capricorn to the coastal waters of Papua New Guinea.

Most of the Great Barrier Reef lies well off the Australian mainland: 150 kilometres in the south, off Mackay; whilst to the north of Cooktown, the inner reefs are within 15 kilometres of the coast. The water depth between the Reef and the mainland coast is some 60 metres.

The Great Barrier Reef is not a continuous barrier but a broken maze of reefs and islands. In places, the Reef is a series of narrow 'ribbon' reefs, while in southern areas it broadens into a vast wilderness of 'patch' reefs separated by winding channels. The Reef comprises some 2500 individual reefs ranging in size from less than one hectare to more than 100 square kilometres. Most reefs are submerged, with some being exposed at low tide.

The individual reefs of the Great Barrier Reef are composed of the accumulated remains of plant and animal calcium carbonate skeletal material, supporting a veneer of living plants and animals. In addition to the reefs there are seventy-one coral islands (called cays) on the Reef.

## **The Great Barrier Reef: heritage value**

The Great Barrier Reef is the result of approximately 10 000 years of coral growth. It is the world's largest and most complex expanse of living coral reefs, encompassing many unique forms of marine life. There are over 1500 species of fish and about 400 species of coral. The Reef is the habitat of a number of endangered marine species and is of great importance as a turtle breeding area.

The Great Barrier Reef is of undoubted world significance. It is an area of great beauty, providing some of the most spectacular scenery on earth. The Reef is a significant part of the world's heritage, having special value for future generations as well as for the present community.

## **The Great Barrier Reef: economic value**

The resources of the Great Barrier Reef have been exploited over a long period of time. Aboriginals fished Reef waters well before Europeans colonised Australia.



After the arrival of Europeans, Reef usage centred initially on the collection of shells for the button trade overseas; on the taking and drying of bêche-de-mer or trepang for the Chinese and South-East Asian market; and on catching reef fish for the local market. At the end of the nineteenth century, commercial enterprises had been extended to harvesting a greater variety of resources such as pearls, dugong, turtles, scallops, prawns and both migratory and bottom-living fishes.

In the 1950s increasing affluence and improved technology led to a rapid increase in recreational interest and to more intensive fishing activity with the use of more sophisticated vessels and fishing techniques.

Today the major economic impact of the Great Barrier Reef arises from activities connected with the extraction of renewable resources (i.e. fishing and collecting) by both commercial and recreational interests.

With the growth of tourism and associated activities it is likely that, within the decade, the economic importance of the tourist industry will exceed that of commercial fishing activity. However both activities have made the Great Barrier Reef an area of considerable economic importance to Australia.

Lizard Island—a continental island with well developed fringing reefs.  
*Photograph courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.*





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# Reef conservation

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## **Commonwealth Government concerns and responsibilities**

The Great Barrier Reef is subject to actual or potential damage from many causes. Natural phenomena such as cyclones and infestations by the crown-of-thorns starfish have caused and continue to cause actual damage. Increased human pressures offer the potential for damage through such activities as unregulated tourism and fishing, and pollution from various sources including oil production and mining.

Widespread public concern within Australia and overseas for the future of the Reef exposed the need for a management system dealing with reef usage. It was also recognised that there was a basic lack of knowledge about the reef structure and processes, as well as about natural and man-induced impacts on its environment. An increase in Australia's off-shore responsibilities coincides with these developments.

In 1953 Australia, by Proclamation, declared its sovereign rights over the continental shelf contiguous to its coast. This included the Reef area. The sovereign rights of coastal States to explore and exploit their continental shelves was acknowledged by the First United Nations Conference on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1958, which reached agreement on four Conventions, including the Convention of the Continental Shelf to which Australia is a party. The current UNCLOS has led, amongst other things, to provision for countries to establish 200 nautical mile fishing zones included in the negotiating text before the Conference. The Commonwealth Government as from 1 November 1979 established a 200 nautical mile fishing zone, in which its fishery laws apply to all persons including foreigners and all boats including foreign boats. A number of other international conventions to which Australia is a party deal with the regulation of matters such as shipping and navigation.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of countries applied the marine park concept in their offshore areas. The concept was rapidly accepted by most coastal countries, and, in keeping with these international moves, the Commonwealth Parliament in 1975 enacted the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act.

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## Legal and administrative framework

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### **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act**

The objective of the Act is to make provision for, and in relation to, the establishment, control, care and development of a marine park in the Great Barrier Reef Region. The Region as shown on the map covers the entire area from the low-water mark on the Queensland coast to east of the outer line of reefs. The Region includes all reefs and shoals but does not cover islands or parts of islands which are part of Queensland and are not owned by the Commonwealth.

The Act specifically prohibits operations for the recovery of minerals within the Marine Park, except for the purpose of research and investigations relevant to the establishment, care and development of the Marine Park or for scientific research.

### **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority**

The three-member Authority, established by the Marine Park Act, comprises a full-time Chairman, a part-time member nominated by the Commonwealth Government, and a part-time member nominated by the Queensland Government.

The principal function of the Authority is to make recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister for Science and the Environment in relation to the care and development of the Marine Park within the Great Barrier Reef Region. The Authority recommends sections of the Region which should be declared as part of the Marine Park, prepares zoning plans and plans of management, arranges research and investigation relevant to the Marine Park, and makes recommendations as to the regulations to apply to the sea, seabed and coral reefs, as well as the airspace above, within the Marine Park. The paramount aim of the Authority in setting aside zones in the Marine Park for such purposes as preservation, research, recreation, fishing and shipping is to allow reasonable human activities to continue in ways which conserve and protect the Great Barrier Reef.

### **The Authority mechanism—consultation and co-operation**

While the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act is Commonwealth legislation, the Commonwealth Government has power under the Act to make arrangements with the Queensland Government for the performance of the functions of the Authority in co-operation with Queensland, with an authority of that State or with a local governing body in that State. Queensland has responsibility for many activities which occur in the Great



Barrier Reef Region, including the administration of islands, many of which Queensland has declared national parks. Consultation between Queensland and the Commonwealth Government is vital for the proper management of such activities as tourism, marine research and park management. As sections of the Marine Park are declared, day-to-day management is to be undertaken by Queensland, subject to the provisions of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act.

### **The Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee**

Established under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, the Consultative Committee furnishes advice to the Minister on matters relating to the operation of the Act and to the Authority on matters relating to the Marine Park, including advice as to the areas that should be part of the Marine Park.

The present Consultative Committee comprises fifteen members, seven nominated by each of the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments, together with a member of the Authority. While it is not possible to have a representative of every activity associated with the Reef on the Consultative Committee, nevertheless government, scientific, commercial, recreation and conservation interests are represented.

The Consultative Committee also provides a major forum for contact and discussion between groups with differing viewpoints on Reef management.

### **Offshore constitutional settlement**

As part of the negotiations between the Commonwealth and the States on offshore jurisdiction, which led to the Premiers' Conference agreement in June 1979, the question of future arrangements in relation to the Great Barrier Reef Region was a matter for discussion between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments. These discussions culminated in an agreement reached between the Prime Minister and the Premier of Queensland on 14 June 1979. It was agreed that the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* was to continue to apply to the whole of the Great Barrier Reef Region as defined in the Act. In addition it was agreed to establish a Ministerial Council to co-ordinate Commonwealth and Queensland Government policy on Great Barrier Reef matters.

The legislation to implement the offshore constitutional settlement accordingly refers to the continued operation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act. In particular, the rights and title to be vested in the States in respect of the seabed of the territorial sea are to be subject to the operation of the Act.

### **Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council**

The Ministerial Council comprises two Ministers from the Commonwealth Government and two Ministers from the Queensland Government. The Ministers represent tourism, marine parks, science and environment.



In co-ordinating Commonwealth and Queensland Government policy on Great Barrier Reef matters, the Ministerial Council includes as part of its functions the processing of proposed recommendations to the Commonwealth by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The Authority reports to the Ministerial Council through the Commonwealth Minister for Science and the Environment. The Ministerial Council is an important focal point for co-operative effort between the Commonwealth and Queensland in the proper management and protection of the Great Barrier Reef.



Snorkelling at Hardy Reef in the Whitsunday area.  
*Photography courtesy of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.*



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# Commonwealth Government policies and initiatives

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## **Marine Park**

The intention of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act is that the Marine Park should grow progressively by the successive declaration of sections of the Park. In accordance with that intention, the Commonwealth Government has established the Capricornia section of the Park. This section is subject to great pressures because it is highly accessible and in close proximity to major population centres. The Commonwealth Government believes that the most vulnerable sections of the Great Barrier Reef Region should be accorded priority.

Work is now being undertaken by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on the proposed section of the Marine Park off Cairns. It is anticipated that this section will be declared before the end of 1980. Including the Capricornia section, the Marine Park would then extend for 500 of the Reef's 2000 kilometre length and would include the most heavily used parts of the Reef.

The policy of progressive declaration not only allows each section of the Reef to be thoroughly investigated prior to recommending declaration but also allows the views of persons interested in the Reef to be taken into account. While such consultation takes time, the Commonwealth Government believes it to be an essential part of the preparation for declaration of sections of Marine Park and to the development of zoning plans for those sections.

While this process is proceeding the entire Great Barrier Reef Region is safeguarded from damage as a result of the package of policies and measures agreed between the Premier of Queensland and the Prime Minister. These are designed specifically to ensure the protection of the Reef from drilling and mining and to formalise arrangements to ensure the provisions of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act are fully and efficiently implemented through co-operation between the two Governments.

## **Offshore mineral exploration**

There have been petroleum exploration permits in the Great Barrier Reef area for some time, and four exploration wells have been drilled in the area by petroleum exploration companies, the last of these being in 1969. In 1970 the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments jointly appointed Royal Commissions to investigate the risks and dangers that might be associated with exploratory and production drilling for

petroleum in the area of the Great Barrier Reef. Pending announcement of the Commission's findings, in 1971 companies holding permits voluntarily agreed to a suspension of operations under all petroleum exploration permits in the Queensland Adjacent Area.

The Commissions' report was presented in 1974. In 1975 the Commonwealth Government announced its agreement with the Chairman's recommendation that there be no further petroleum exploration until research on the short and long term effects of oil pollution on the Reef ecosystem was completed and assessed.

On 4 June 1979 the Prime Minister reconfirmed that there should be no further exploration for petroleum in the Great Barrier Reef area and no renewal of petroleum exploration permits in the area until the results of both short and longer term research are known.

The Prime Minister and the Premier of Queensland further announced in their joint statement on 14 June 1979 that it was the policy of both the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments to prohibit any drilling on the Reef or any drilling or mining which could damage the Reef.

### **Offshore commercial fisheries**

The fisheries of the Great Barrier Reef Region are classified by the Australian Fisheries Council so that they are fully exploited by Australians and no foreign fishing will be permitted.

Commonwealth legislation regulates commercial fishing beyond the 3-mile territorial sea, while Queensland regulates commercial fishing within the 3-mile territorial sea.

Commercial fishing operations being undertaken in Marine Park areas zoned for that purpose will be regulated under the relevant Commonwealth or State fisheries legislation, but subject to the Marine Park Act.

### **Offshore recreational fishing**

The Coral Sea area near Cairns provides the best recreational fishing in the world for black marlin and is estimated to be worth over \$6 million in direct benefits to the Cairns area.

The Commonwealth Government has decided to ban all longline fishing from an extensive area of waters off North Queensland because of the economic importance of the black marlin sport fishing to the Cairns region. In addition to those areas off Queensland where longline fishing is already prohibited under the Australia-Japan Tuna Longline Fishing Agreement, a further 48 000 square miles is to be closed to longline fishing. The new area of closure will run parallel to the coast, about 140 miles out to sea, from just north of Townsville to almost the top of Cape York Peninsula.

### **Tourism**

The Great Barrier Reef Region is a major international tourist drawcard for Australia. Overseas visitors and Australians alike take advantage of



the Region's tropical diversity to pursue, year round, a wide range of activities such as game fishing, boating, snorkelling, swimming, hiking and general relaxation. Many tourist activities are directed towards providing visitors with a greater understanding of the Reef ecosystem, thus emphasising the need for conservation and rational, planned human use, compatible with its conservation.

Tourism in the Reef Region is based on the major economic centres of Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns, as well as on the resorts on Hayman, Heron, Green, Lizard and a number of other islands along the Reef.

The Commonwealth Government sponsors studies on the environmental and economic impacts of tourism on the Reef Region. Research conducted around Heron and Green Islands has indicated that high level use of some popular Reef areas can cause localised damage. The Marine Park Authority will ensure, through careful zoning and soundly based management procedures, that damage to sensitive Reef areas is minimised in important tourist spots.

### **Shipping and navigation**

Almost one-quarter of Australia's exports pass through a number of busy ports on the Queensland coast and within the Great Barrier Reef. For more than 100 years ships on voyages to Indonesia and South-East Asia have used a safe and calm route through the Reef. Since 1915 the Commonwealth Government has controlled the passage and more than 100 lighthouses, beacons, buoys and tidal transmitting stations that serve the route. The equipment is constantly being updated and improved.

### **Marine pollution**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act provides for the making of regulations for the protection and preservation of the Marine Park and specifically regulating or prohibiting acts, whether in the Marine Park or elsewhere, that may pollute water in a manner harmful to animals and plants in the Marine Park.

With regard to ship-sourced pollution, Queensland legislation applying to all ships gives effect to the Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil within the 3-mile territorial sea, with Commonwealth Government legislation applying to Australian ships outside the territorial sea. Part VIIA of the *Navigation Act* 1912 includes provisions for intervention by Commonwealth authorities in cases of pollution or threatened pollution by oil from ships. Commonwealth legislation will be introduced to implement the provisions of International Conventions relating to Intervention on the High Seas in cases of Oil Pollution Casualties, 1969, and Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1969. Australia is also a signatory to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, which is not yet in force but which contains strict controls for the disposal of garbage and other wastes in the vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef.

To counter the possibility of a ship-sourced oil spill on the Queensland coast or the waters of the Great Barrier Reef, the Commonwealth Department of Transport has stockpiles of oil spill combat equipment situated at Brisbane and Cairns. Additional air-portable back-up equipment is held in Sydney.

Similarly the Queensland State marine and port authorities have stocks of equipment and action plans detailing contingency arrangements for all ports on the Queensland coast.

Training courses in oil spill counter-measures are conducted jointly by the Commonwealth and State authorities in Queensland annually.

Arrangements concerning land-based marine pollution and marine pollution through dumping are being discussed by the Commonwealth Government and Queensland.

### **Defence activities**

The Department of Defence is responsible for a number of specific tasks within the Great Barrier Reef Region and in other cases for the provision of assistance when requested.

The Royal Australian Navy has the task of surveying the waters in and around the Reef and the subsequent production of navigational charts. The Army, in conjunction with the Division of National Mapping, conducts topographical mapping of the land mass. The Royal Australian Air Force provides the necessary aerial photographic support.

The destruction of unexploded ordnance such as naval mines, aerial bombs and shells which are found on occasions within the Reef is the responsibility of the Armed Services. To this end each Service maintains specialist teams ready for deployment to meet any contingency involving munitions.

Defence Force assistance to the civil community can be provided, when requested by a competent authority, for activities such as search and rescue and emergencies involving a serious threat to the environment.

### **Surveillance**

The Commonwealth Government's policy is to protect the Reef where possible from illegal activities which could damage it.

Civil coastal surveillance of the Reef Region is co-ordinated by the Department of Transport. Surveillance aircraft fly daily along the coastline north from Cairns, naval patrol boats carry out regular patrols, and long-range maritime aircraft of the RAAF make up to four flights a month over the outer Reef. This surveillance is to detect unauthorised activities by foreign fishing vessels, illegal landings, oil spills and customs and quarantine breaches.

### **Heritage status**

The Great Barrier Reef has been entered in the Register of the National Estate, which means that it is a ' . . . component of the natural environment of Australia . . . that (has) aesthetic, scientific or social significance or



other special value for future generations, as well as for the present community' (*Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*).

Listing on the Register means that the Commonwealth Government and its authorities and departments must do all that is possible to avoid adverse effects to the Reef.

### **Coral Sea Islands Territory**

This Australian Territory, whose ecosystem is contiguous with the Great Barrier Reef, consists of the islands in the Coral Sea.

The reefs and cays in the Coral Sea are important as nesting sites for seabirds and marine turtles. Steps are being taken to ensure that the wildlife and its habitats are afforded maximum protection.

### **Aboriginal and Islander Australians**

Before European colonisation Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were exploiting the natural resources of the Great Barrier Reef. This attachment to the Reef continues to this day with the recognition and encouragement of the Commonwealth Government.

One industry with some potential is *bêche-de-mer* fishing. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is hopeful that Aboriginals can be involved in a pilot *bêche-de-mer* fishing scheme being developed by the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry in conjunction with the Queensland Fisheries Service.

### **International**

#### *Torres Strait Protected Zone*

The northern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Region is the northernmost tip of Cape York, but the Reef continues northwards into the area of the Protected Zone to be established by the Torres Strait Treaty between Australia and Papua New Guinea. The purposes of the Treaty partners in establishing the Protected Zone are:

- to acknowledge and protect the traditional way of life and livelihood of the traditional inhabitants of the Torres Strait area; and
- to protect and preserve the marine environment and indigenous fauna and flora.

To meet these aims the Treaty includes measures for the management of fisheries, for the prevention and control of pollution, for the protection of species that are or may become threatened with extinction, and to prevent the introduction of species that may be harmful to the indigenous fauna and flora. Mining and drilling of the seabed for oil, gas or other mineral resources is prohibited for a period of ten years (which may be extended by the parties) from the time of entry into force of the Treaty.

#### *Conservation responsibilities*

The Prime Minister announced on 9 June 1980 that the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments have under discussion a proposal that the

Reef be nominated for the World Heritage List. The list consists of a number of properties forming part of the world's natural and cultural heritage and includes such natural features as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park and the Galapagos Islands.

The World Heritage List is established under the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. It obliges Australia to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its Territory.

The Government is also looking into implementing the World Conservation Strategy in Australia. The aim of this strategy is to achieve the three main objectives of living resource conservation:

- to maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems;
- to preserve genetic diversity; and
- to ensure the sustainable utilisation of species and ecosystems.

### **Reef research**

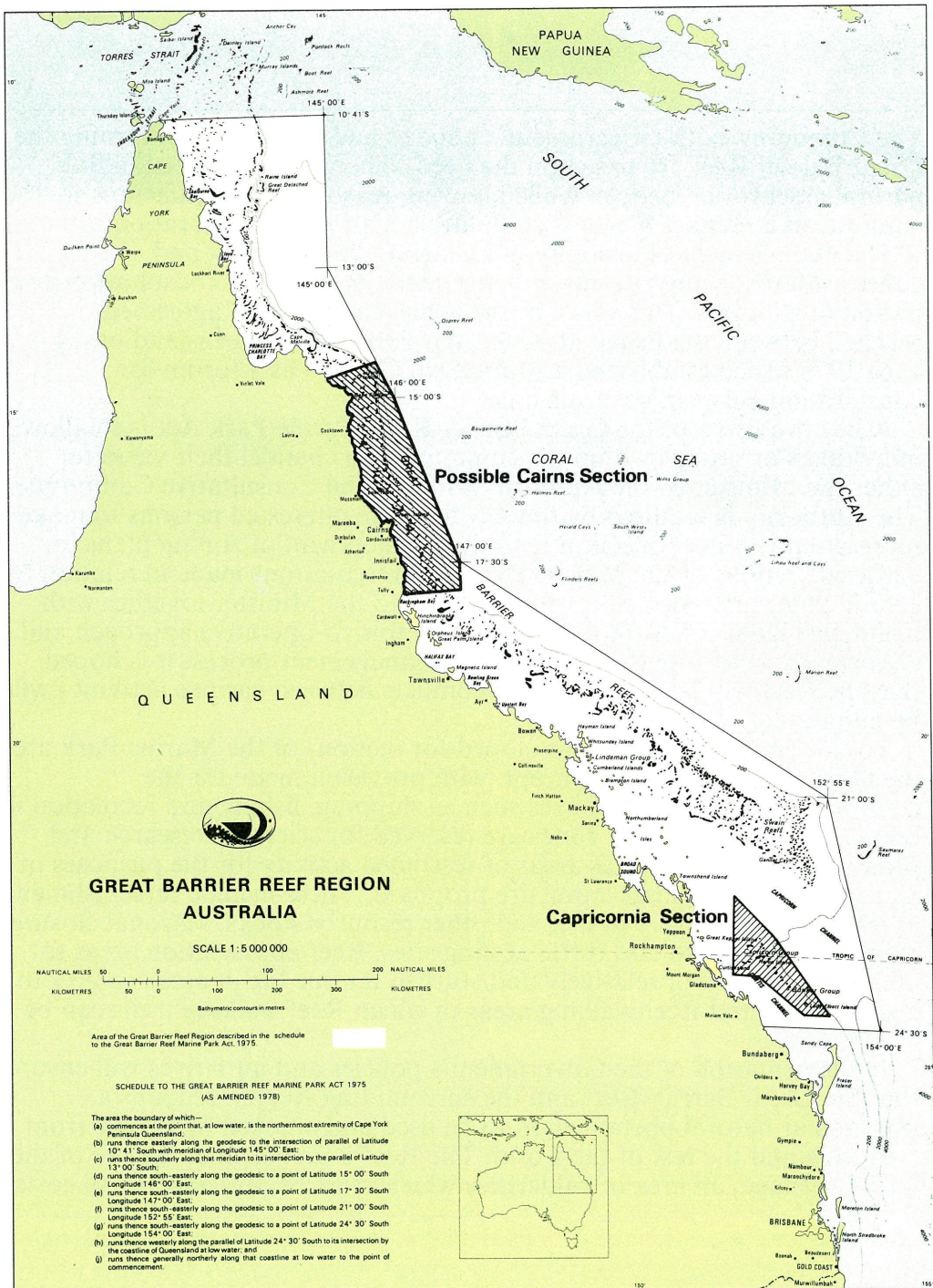
The Commonwealth Government has accorded research on the Great Barrier Reef the highest priority and has made arrangements for its co-ordination. The program of short and longer term research is to be monitored by the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council and closely supervised by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The program has several complementary components:

- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority arranges for research and investigations relevant to the Marine Park and carries out monitoring activities relevant to its management responsibilities and socio-economic studies and macro resource surveys for which no other institution is equipped;
- the Australian Institute of Marine Science is concerned primarily in studying the key environmental and ecosystem processes of the Reef;
- CSIRO's major concern is with the physical oceanography of the waters adjoining the Reef;
- the Bureau of Mineral Resources carries out research into the geological evolution of the Reef.

The Funding Advisory Panel of the Australian Marine Sciences and Technologies Advisory Committee advises on the necessary research programs to increase knowledge of the Reef. The Government has recently approved grants totalling about \$300 000 for projects involving research on the Reef. These funds are additional to those provided to CSIRO, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The aim of many of the projects is to promote understanding of the Reef's delicately balanced ecosystem. Studies will include examinations of the history and evolution of the Reef, the biological communities of importance and ocean circulation and pollutants.



With regard to commercial fisheries the Commonwealth is financing, or has financed, research and survey projects on prawns, spanish mackerel, scallops, mud crabs, barramundi, tropical rock lobsters and oyster farming which are of relevance to managing fish stocks in this Region.



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# The Reef and people

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The Commonwealth Government's policies and initiatives concerning the Great Barrier Reef are based on the need to conserve this outstanding natural asset for all people, while allowing reasonable multiple uses to continue in a manner which is compatible with Reef conservation.

The management philosophy of balancing development and conservation is being put into practice through intensive consultation and liaison at all levels. This was a prime achievement of the agreement reached between the Prime Minister and Premier of Queensland on 14 June 1979 which established a Ministerial Council as a forum for consultation between governments.

A key provision of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act is to allow individuals or groups within the community to channel their views to either the Minister or the Authority through the Consultative Committee. The Authority is required by the Act to invite interested persons to make representations in connection with the development of zoning plans for declared sections of the Marine Park. Representations made in relation to zoning plans are required to be submitted to the Minister together with comments from the Authority. By taking this co-operative approach and deliberately involving the public in the management process it is hoped that the Reef will be protected and conflicts between various activities will be minimised.

To this end zoning plans developed for sections of the Marine Park are based on the multiple use concept, with provision made for the continuation of established uses such as shipping, fishing and recreation in certain zones, while other zones are reserved for scientific research and preservation. Within zones areas of restricted activity for the purposes of management and conservation are proposed. These include replenishment areas to allow recovery of fish and other resource stocks, seasonal closure areas to protect bird and turtle nesting sites, Reef appreciation areas to allow observation of relatively undisturbed marine life in areas subject to heavy usage, and Reef walking areas in which Reef walking trails can be established.

Implementation of the Government's policies and initiatives will ensure that the Great Barrier Reef and the surrounding Region remains a spectacular natural phenomenon to be used and enjoyed by people from Australia and the rest of the world. The Reef is an essential feature of the world heritage, an area of wilderness which must be protected at all costs.



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# Appendixes

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## APPENDIX A

### Selected statements and media releases

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## Petroleum exploration in the Great Barrier Reef

*Statement by the Prime Minister,  
the Rt Hon. Malcolm Fraser, C.H.*

*4 June 1979*

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The Commonwealth Government has taken decisions on the question of future petroleum exploration in the area of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Royal Commissions into exploratory and production drilling for petroleum in the area of the Great Barrier Reef reported in November 1974. All Commissioners—Sir Gordon Wallace, the Chairman, Dr J. E. Smith and Mr V. J. Moroney, the Members—agreed that drilling ‘should not be permitted on any cay, island, or reef or national park or marine park when declared’.

Both Dr Smith and Mr Moroney considered that drilling could be permitted in certain areas, provided recommended buffer zones and safety precautions were strictly applied and supervised.

Sir Gordon Wallace was of the view ‘that petroleum drilling should be postponed, and be planned and permitted only in the light, and with the aid, of full scientific knowledge of all the effects of oil pollution, direct and indirect, short and long term, on the coral and other marine life’.

The Commonwealth Government has given detailed consideration to these differing views and has decided that, in line with the recommendations of the Chairman of the Royal Commissions, there should be no further exploration for petroleum in the Great Barrier Reef Region and that there should be no renewal of petroleum exploration permits in the Region until the results of both short and longer term research are known.

This decision will give positive effect to the categorical and absolute guarantee I expressed in Parliament on 22 May when I made it clear that the Government will not permit any drilling on the Great Barrier Reef, or any drilling or mining which could damage the Reef.

On that occasion I indicated that AMSTAC—the Australian Marine Science and Technologies Advisory Committee—had been asked by the Government to submit advice to the Government on a program of research on the reef environment for consideration in the Budget context. AMSTAC—which is under the Chairmanship of Professor Birch, a distinguished scientist—is a standing Committee of the Australian Science and Technology Council.

On 4 April this year, I wrote to Senator Webster, the Minister for Science and the Environment, and suggested that the Minister might present a submission to AMSTAC on a possible program of research into the ecosystem of the Great Barrier Reef. As a result of the Minister’s submission, and on account of AMSTAC’s own expert knowledge, proposals relating to the research program will shortly be available for consideration by the Government. I am confident that the resulting research program will



do much to minimise Australia's existing lack of knowledge with respect to the ecosystem of the Reef.

An important feature of arrangements with respect to the Reef is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This body has the responsibility of recommending areas within the Great Barrier Reef Region for declaration as parts of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Marine Park Authority, in its 1977-78 Annual Report, foreshadowed the possible declaration of the Capricornia Section of the Great Barrier Reef Region as the first section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Government acknowledges that it has constitutional powers in this area. It has been engaged in discussions with the Queensland Government against that background.

It is desirable that the declaration of the Marine Park should await the outcome of discussions with Queensland which flow from the 1978 Premiers Conference agreement that the powers of the States be extended to the territorial sea, including the seabed. Because of the proximity of the Reef to the Queensland coast, the question of appropriate jurisdiction over the national asset is of obvious relevance in that context. To this end, I wrote to the Premier of Queensland on 19 December last year and suggested that there should be consultation between our respective Governments on development of the arrangements resulting from the Premiers Conference agreements and also the establishment control, care and development of a Marine Park in the Great Barrier Reef Region.

Consultations, both at the officials and Ministerial level, have taken place—most recently in Sydney on 17 May—and I am confident of an early resolution of these complex questions.

I am hopeful that an early announcement can be made of the declaration of the Capricorn Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Government's attitude and position on these issues is clear:

- The Government has stated repeatedly that it will not permit any drilling on the Great Barrier Reef or any mining or drilling which would damage the Reef.
- Let there be no confusion on this point—no part of the Reef is going to be damaged by an activity that takes place on the Reef or off the Reef.
- The Government has adopted the recommendations of the Chairman of the Royal Commissions that petroleum drilling should be postponed pending the receipt of the results of short and longer term research into the Reef.
- The Government has asked AMSTAC to recommend a program of research to the Government and will be considering that recommendation in the Budget context.
- Discussions with Queensland on the interrelated questions of the Premiers Conference agreements on the extension of State powers to the territorial seas and the management of the Great Barrier Reef Region are at an advanced stage.

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# Great Barrier Reef

*Statement by the Prime Minister,  
the Rt Hon. Malcolm Fraser, C.H.  
14 June 1979*

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The Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, and the Premier, Mr Joh Bjelke-Petersen, conferred today on the future consultative arrangements for joint consideration of recommendations of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This Authority is established by the Commonwealth Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, which will continue unchanged.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is designed to provide for the progressive declarations and oversight of Marine Parks in the Region of the Great Barrier Reef. The boundaries of this Region will remain as defined in the Commonwealth legislation.

No provision has to date been made for both Governments to co-ordinate policy at the ministerial level. Accordingly, it was agreed at today's meeting to establish a Ministerial Council comprising Commonwealth and State Ministers particularly representing marine park, conservation, science and tourism.

The Commonwealth Ministers will be Phillip Lynch, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, whose portfolio responsibilities include tourism—a major activity in the area of the Great Barrier Reef—and Senator Webster, the Minister for Science and the Environment, who is directly responsible for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The Queensland Ministers will be Mr Newberry, the Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation, and Mr Hodges, the Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism.

Mr Fraser and Mr Bjelke-Petersen agreed that the first section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park—the Capricornia Section—should be processed by the Ministerial Council as an immediate task to enable early proclamation to take place.

They also agreed that as the sections of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are proclaimed, the day-to-day management should be undertaken by officers of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, who, in discharging these responsibilities, will be subject to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The Authority will continue to have the responsibility for:

- recommending the declaration of Parks;
- developing zoning plans and plans of management of Parks; and
- arranging for research and investigation relevant to Marine Parks.

In relation to the Territorial sea, the Premier and the Prime Minister agreed that the arrangements with Queensland which will flow from the agreements of the June 1978 Premiers' Conference will be on the same basis as arrangements to be entered into in respect of other States, but with full regard to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and to the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Statement of 4 June on Petroleum Exploration in the Great Barrier Reef.

Both the Premier and the Prime Minister confirmed that it was the policy of their respective Governments to prohibit any drilling on the Reef or any drilling or mining which could damage the Reef.

Mr Bjelke-Petersen and Mr Fraser agreed that the program of short and longer term research into the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem referred to in that Statement will be



monitored by the Ministerial Council, and will be closely supervised by the Marine Park Authority.

By creating an appropriate consultative mechanism these arrangements will serve to ensure that the Authority functions within the framework of the joint policies of the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments as they further develop.

The two Governments will be consulting forthwith on implementation of these arrangements.

Both the Premier and the Prime Minister affirmed that the basic policy intention of both Governments was to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef area be recognised and preserved as an important feature of Queensland's and Australia's heritage.

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## Commonwealth offshore constitutional responsibilities and the Great Barrier Reef

*Statement by the Commonwealth Attorney-General,  
Senator the Hon. Peter Durack, Q.C.  
23 June 1979*

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With the agreement reached between the Commonwealth and Queensland last week, the issue of the control and management of the Great Barrier Reef which has clouded the whole topic of present and proposed offshore constitutional arrangements has now been resolved.

The Commonwealth and Queensland will now have a joint consultative mechanism for the management and preservation of the Great Barrier Reef Region, which extends right into low-water mark along the Queensland coast and around Queensland islands in the area.

It is important that the constitutional basis for these arrangements should be properly understood.

There is a practical need for the Commonwealth and a State, when they are each concerned with a matter, to channel that concern into the paths of co-operation rather than of confrontation. However, it is a fundamental rule of our Constitution that, where Commonwealth power extends to a matter that is also of interest to the States, the Commonwealth has the ultimate power.

The Commonwealth Government's position on the need to protect the Barrier Reef is clear. On 4 June the Prime Minister announced a number of decisions, including the preparation of a research program. Those decisions give an unequivocal commitment not to permit any drilling or mining anywhere that could possibly damage the Reef.

The Commonwealth's decisions announced on 4 June adopt the stricter restrictions on drilling proposed by Sir Gordon Wallace, the Chairman of the Royal Commissions into petroleum drilling in the area of the Reef. That inquiry was jointly initiated by the Commonwealth and Queensland and reported in November 1974.

The Commonwealth's interest in preserving the Reef was confirmed in 1975 when the Parliament passed the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act with the support of all parties. The national Parliament took the view that the Reef did not simply belong to one State but to the people of Australia, who had an obligation to see that it was preserved for the future generations of all nations.

In the complex negotiations between the Commonwealth and the States to find solutions of the vexed questions of offshore jurisdiction, the Great Barrier Reef Region presented an obviously difficult problem. Both the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments recognised this, and the need to make special arrangements. The consultations with Queensland culminated in the agreement reached between the Prime Minister and Mr Bjelke-Petersen at Emerald last week.

### **Commonwealth Act unchanged**

Those arrangements involve acceptance that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act will continue unchanged. The Great Barrier Reef Region as defined by it will continue unchanged, as will the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority established by it.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is designed to provide for the progressive declarations and oversight of Marine Parks in the Region of the Great Barrier Reef. The Authority is concerned therefore not only with specific areas that have been actually declared to be part of the Marine Park. In addition the Authority has a statutory responsibility, in effect, to oversee the well-being of the whole Reef.

### **Co-operation**

The Commonwealth Act gives recognition to the practical necessity for co-operation with the Queensland Government. One of the members of the Authority is to be nominated by the Queensland Government. The other two are Commonwealth nominees. The Act specifically states that the Authority can perform any of its functions in co-operation with Queensland, and also provides that the Commonwealth Government may make arrangements with the Queensland Government for the performance of functions by Queensland officers.

The joint arrangements the Prime Minister has now secured with Queensland, under which day-to-day management will be by Queensland officials, will utilise these provisions of the Act.

These provisions are now to be reinforced by a consultative Ministerial Council comprising Commonwealth and State Ministers representing marine parks, conservation, science and tourism. The first section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park recommended by the Authority—the Capricornia Section—is to be processed by the Ministerial Council as an immediate task to enable early proclamation to take place. The ultimate power to declare areas to be part of the Marine Park is with, and will remain with, the Commonwealth.

In the debates in the Senate four years ago on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, I said: 'It is perfectly obvious that it is not a practical proposition for the Commonwealth Government or an authority of that Government to exercise powers within an area of this kind without having to co-operate at almost every point with the Government of the State which is adjacent to the area and which controls a large number of islands which are within the area'.

The joint arrangements with Queensland can only enhance the development and protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

### **Constitutional questions**

In federations such as ours, there are difficult and intricate problems in matters of offshore jurisdiction. After a decade of Commonwealth-State disputes on the matter involving major litigation in the High Court, the point needs little elaboration.

Australia's experience in this is by no means unique. Similar questions arose in the United States and subsequently in Canada. In their cases, as in the case of Australia, the ruling of the highest constitutional tribunal was in favour of the central government. In



their cases, as in our own case, it was found that the constitutional ruling was not the end of the matter.

Thus the High Court's decision in the *Seas and Submerged Lands* case in late 1975 in the event confirmed full jurisdiction on the part of the Commonwealth Parliament right up to low-water mark. However the decision also threw doubts on the adequacy of existing State extra-territorial powers in the territorial sea on a number of topics which history, common sense and the sheer practicalities of the matter mark out for State administration rather than Commonwealth administration, in the absence of overriding national or international considerations.

Port facilities are one example. The enforcement of the general criminal law in the territorial sea is another. The Commonwealth Crimes at Sea Act, which will come into operation in the near future, recognises that generally it is for the States to deal with crimes in the territorial sea.

Agreement in principle was reached at the Premiers Conference in 1977 with all States that the territorial sea should therefore be the responsibility of the States. The Conference stipulated that this was not to affect the Commonwealth's international responsibilities and marine parks were not dealt with. Implementation of the 1977 Agreement was considered at the 1978 Premiers Conference, which agreed to an extension of State powers to the territorial sea, supported by appropriate amendments of the Seas and Submerged Lands Act and the vesting of appropriate rights in the States in respect of the seabed in the territorial sea.

### **Commonwealth responsibility**

It would be a mistake however to see the proposed implementation of these arrangements as representing an abdication by the Commonwealth Government of its own national and international responsibilities in relation to the territorial sea. Thus, the arrangements agreed with Queensland recognise that the implementation of the 1978 Premiers Conference with respect to the territorial sea will be subject to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act and the decisions on the Reef announced by the Prime Minister on 4 June.

There may be some who would prefer an abdication by the Commonwealth of these responsibilities. However that is no part of our proposals. I repeat what I have said in the Senate:

The discussions with the States are on the basis of the exercise by this Parliament—not anybody else—of its constitutional power. We are not talking about giving away the ultimate constitutional power of this Parliament.

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# Capricornia Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No. S 212,  
21 October 1979.*

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## PROCLAMATION

Commonwealth of  
Australia  
ZELMAN COWEN  
Governor-General

By His Excellency the  
Governor-General of  
the Commonwealth of  
Australia

WHEREAS it is provided by sub-section (1) of section 31 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* that, subject to sub-section (5) of that section, the Governor-General may, by Proclamation, declare an area specified in the Proclamation, being an area within the Great Barrier Reef Region, to be a part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and assign a name or other designation to that area:

AND WHEREAS it is provided by sub-section (5) of that section that the Governor-General shall not make a Proclamation under that section except after consideration by the Federal Executive Council of a report by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in relation to the matter dealt with by the Proclamation:

AND WHEREAS the Federal Executive Council has considered a report by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in relation to the declaration of so much of the area specified in the Schedule as is within the Great Barrier Reef Region to be a part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park:

NOW THEREFORE I, Sir Zelman Cowen, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, acting with the advice of the Federal Executive Council, hereby—

- (a) declare so much of the area specified in the Schedule as is within the Great Barrier Reef Region to be a part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park;
- (b) assign the name 'Great Barrier Reef Marine Park—Capricornia Section' to the area so declared (hereinafter referred to as the 'declared area');
- (c) specify the depth of 1000 metres below the seabed beneath any sea within the declared area as the depth below that seabed to which the sub-soil beneath that seabed shall be taken to be in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park;
- (d) specify the depth of 1000 metres below the surface of any land within the declared area as the depth below that surface to which the sub-soil beneath that land shall be taken to be in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; and
- (c) specify the height of 915 metres above the surface of the declared area as the height above that surface to which the airspace above that area shall be taken to be in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

## SCHEDULE

### Description of Declared Area

The boundary of which—

- (a) commences at a point of Latitude 22° 30' South, Longitude 151° 30' East;



- (b) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 23° 10' South, Longitude 152° 10' East;
  - (c) runs thence south-easterly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 24° 15' South, Longitude 153° 05' East;
  - (d) runs thence west along the parallel of Latitude 24° 15' South to its intersection with meridian of Longitude 152° 40' East;
  - (e) runs thence north-westerly along the geodesic to a point of Latitude 23° 45' South, Longitude 151° 55' East;
  - (f) runs thence west along the parallel of Latitude 23° 45' South to its intersection with meridian of Longitude 151° 30' East; and
  - (g) runs thence north along the last-mentioned meridian to the point of commencement.
- (L.S.) GIVEN under my Hand and the Great Seal of Australia on the seventeenth day of October 1979.

By His Excellency's Command,

J. J. WEBSTER  
Minister of State for Science and the Environment

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

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## Electorate talk

*Statement by the Prime Minister,  
the Rt Hon. Malcolm Fraser, C.H.  
21 October 1979*

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The Great Barrier Reef is a unique and irreplaceable part of Australia's heritage. It is, in fact, one of the great natural wonders of the world.

I am pleased to be able to announce tonight that the Governor-General has approved the proclamation of the Capricornia Section of the reef as the first stage of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Capricornia Section was chosen for the initial stage of the Marine Park because its reefs, shoals and waters form a distinct geographical unit. There are several habitable coral cays—*islands* composed of coral sand and rubble, often densely vegetated. These provide unrivalled opportunities for enjoyment for all Australians, and for the thousands of tourists they attract from overseas.

Parts of this coral reef ecosystem are breeding areas vital to the continued survival of several species of fish, turtles and birds. The Capricornia Section is also the most accessible part of the reef. Tourist traffic from southern capitals and overseas, as well as from the nearby cities of Bundaberg, Maryborough, Gladstone and Rockhampton, is becoming increasingly heavy.

The increasing use of and interest in the reef could pose problems. While we welcome its importance as a recreational and educational facility for so many people, the upsurge in interest could result in over-use.

The threat to the reef comes not only from tourist, but from commercial interest in its vast resources. You will recall that in June this year I announced the Government's decisions on the question of future petroleum exploration in the area of the reef. In accordance with the recommendations of the Chairman of the Royal Commissions, we decided that no further petroleum exploration should occur, and that existing exploration permits would not be renewed until the results of both the short and longer term scientific research recommended by the Royal Commissions were available.

I am also able to announce tonight that the Government has asked a panel from the Australian Marine Sciences and Technologies Advisory Committee to advise on the necessary research programs and projects to increase our knowledge of the reef.

The panel, chaired by Professor Arthur Birch, an eminent scientist at the Australian National University, will also oversight research on the need for further protection of the reef. The task of Professor Birch and his panel will be to make sure that we get value for money in this research program, to monitor its progress and to report to the Government as results become available.

We allocated \$300 000 for the research in the Budget. Researchers presently engaged in this work include the CSIRO, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the James Cook University and various other agencies. We would expect them all to actively compete for the funds available.

I would like to pay tribute here to the co-operation of the Premier of Queensland, Mr Bjelke-Petersen, in the establishment of the Marine Park. In June, the Premier and I confirmed that it was the policy of our respective Governments to prohibit any drilling on the Great Barrier Reef or any drilling which could damage the reef. The Commonwealth and Queensland have agreed to set up a Ministerial Council to give effect to our joint policies to protect the reef and its associated environment. The Ministerial Council had its inaugural meeting in Brisbane earlier this month and decided that the proclamation of the Capricornia Section of the Marine Park should proceed as a matter of urgency.

The council also agreed that the day-to-day management of the park should be undertaken by the appropriate Queensland authorities, who, in discharging that responsibility, will be subject to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which is a statutory authority established under Commonwealth legislation.

The Marine Park Authority will continue to be responsible for recommending the declaration of marine parks, developing zoning and management plans for such parks and arranging for relevant investigation and research.

Let me emphasise, the proclamation of the Capricornia Section of the reef is only the first step in achieving the best possible Marine Park. Two vital steps which are now in progress are the development of a zoning plan and a plan of management for the park. The zoning plan will be prepared by the Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. It will seek to make sure that any adverse effects by people visiting the park will be minimal. The Authority will ask the public for its views on how the park should be zoned.

There will also be opportunity to comment on the draft zoning plan, which will be made public before final decisions are taken. Once the zoning arrangements are settled, the zones will require management on a day-by-day basis. Officials are presently discussing these matters so that the park will be set up as intended.

While the creation and successful functioning of the Ministerial Council demonstrates the wisdom of involving the Queensland Government in the actions leading up to the declaration of marine parks on the Barrier Reef I must emphasise that the final responsibility lies with the Commonwealth—and that is as it should be.

The proclamation of this first part of the Marine Park is further evidence of the Commonwealth's commitment to the conservation of our environment. Over the past four years we have taken decisions that will guarantee that our children and their children have the opportunity to enjoy and experience the unique heritage of Australia. We took



action in 1976 to stop mining on Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island, thereby helping to preserve a fragile part of our nation. We established the Kakadu National Park in the Alligator Rivers Region of the Northern Territory. That park will protect and preserve the natural fauna, flora, the Aboriginal sacred sites and cave paintings and is likely to rank with famous national parks around the world. We have banned whaling and the importation of whale products after 1980. We are studying the question of extending the ban on the import of products from animals which are endangered and we have assisted the World Wildlife Fund to establish a branch in Australia.

Our commitment to conservation has been demonstrated, not by empty rhetoric, but by determined and positive action. This first proclamation and our commitment to future development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park underlines our determination to secure the Australian environment for all Australians, for all time.

I would hope that Australians and many overseas tourists will visit our newest Marine Park and enjoy an environment unmatched in scale, diversity and beauty anywhere in the world.

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## Great Barrier Reef Policies

*Statement by the Minister for Science and the Environment,  
the Hon. David Thomson, M.C.  
24 April 1980*

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The Minister for Science and Environment, Mr David Thomson, today reaffirmed the Government's commitment to protection of the Great Barrier Reef from damage caused by human activity.

He said the Government was emphatic about its policy against drilling on the Reef.

Mr Thomson said he was concerned at recent statements claiming that the Reef was not adequately protected.

These statements had come from an apparent lack of understanding of the functions of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Act under which it operates.

Mr Thomson said:

- In June 1979 the Prime Minister announced the Government's decision that there should be no further exploration for petroleum in the Great Barrier Reef Region and no renewal of petroleum exploration permits in the region until the results of both short and longer term research were known.
- In the same month the Prime Minister and the Premier of Queensland confirmed the policies of the respective Governments in relation to the Reef. They issued a joint statement declaring that the policy was to prohibit any drilling on the Reef, or any drilling which could damage the Reef.
- These policies had not changed.
- The Government's approach to management of the Reef was to ensure that whatever was done was done efficiently.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act became law in 1975.
- The procedure now being followed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was precisely what was proposed by the then Labor Government and

adopted by Parliament. This was 'The establishment of a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority which will examine the entire Barrier Reef Region, determine which sections of the Region should be proclaimed as part of the Reef Marine Park, and decide appropriate uses for its various sections'.

- In accordance with this charter, the Authority had achieved declaration of the Capricornia Section of the Reef as a Marine Park. This was the most heavily used section of the Reef.
- The next most heavily used section—the Cairns Section—was being investigated for declaration now.
- Together, these sections would represent 25 per cent of the 2000 kilometre length of the Reef.
- The Authority would proceed to investigate and recommend other sections for declaration.
- The Government was encouraging the people of Australia to contribute, through nation-wide public participation programs, to the formulation of the Marine Park zoning plans.
- The 1975 Act specifically stated that the Governor-General should not proclaim an area to be part of the Marine Park except after consideration by the Executive Council of a report by the Marine Park Authority.
- It would take the Authority a considerable time to undertake a thorough investigation and to prepare a comprehensive report covering the entire Reef.

Mr Thomson said other significant developments included:

- Establishment of a Ministerial Council, consisting of two Commonwealth and two Queensland Government Ministers, to give effect to the joint policies to protect the Reef and its associated environment.
- Appointment of a panel from the Australian Marine Sciences and Technologies Advisory Committee to advise on the necessary research programs and projects to increase knowledge of the Reef.
- Allocation of \$300 000 for that research in the 1979–80 Budget, in addition to the research funds provided to the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Marine Park Authority.
- Progressive raising of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority staff ceiling from eighteen to forty-four.
- Increased support in staff positions and funding for the Institute of Marine Science.

Mr Thomson said: 'Our primary aims are to provide maximum protection for the Reef and minimum disruption to established, reasonable public activities.

The actions this Government is taking are achieving these goals.'



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# Longline fishing ban off North Queensland

*Statement by the Minister for Primary Industry,  
the Hon. P. J. Nixon  
5 June 1980*

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The Commonwealth Government is to ban all longline fishing from an extensive area of waters off North Queensland.

Announcing this today, the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Peter Nixon, said the new area to be closed, covering approximately 48 000 square miles, was in addition to those areas off Queensland where longline fishing was already prohibited under the Australia-Japan Tuna Longline Fishing Agreement.

Mr Nixon said Japanese authorities had been informed that the rights of Japanese longliners in the new area of closure would expire with the current Agreement on 31 October.

The new area of closure will run parallel to the coast, about 140 miles out to sea, from just north of Townsville to almost the top of Cape York Peninsula. The closed area will extend an average of 110 miles beyond the outer edge of the Great Barrier Reef.

Mr Nixon said the Government's decision had been based on a recommendation of the Game Fish Working Committee.

The Committee was established last October to monitor and analyse information on Japanese longlining activity during the course of the Tuna Fishing Agreement. The Committee is made up of officials of the Commonwealth, Queensland and NSW Governments and representatives of major game fishing organisations.

Mr Nixon said the Government had decided on the additional area of closure because of the economic importance of the black marlin sport fishery to the Cairns region.

'While there is no evidence to indicate that black marlin stocks have been endangered by longline fishing in the region, the Government has accepted the finding of the Committee that the Coral Sea area near Cairns provides the best recreational fishery in the world for black marlin.

It is clearly of world-wide significance and therefore important to the Cairns area and to Australia,' Mr Nixon said.

He said that while the Japanese were primarily fishing for tuna, studies had shown that the area to be closed to longlining had provided up to 95 per cent of all black marlin taken by Japanese vessels off the entire Queensland coast.

It was estimated that during the 1979 fishing season, which is between September and December in the area, about 3700 black marlin had been taken by Japanese longliners in the waters in the Cairns region.

Mr Nixon said the Game Fish Working Committee had recommended the adoption of one of two eastern boundaries for the new area of closure.

'One of these follows map grid squares while the other is a straighter line, which would make surveillance easier.

The Government has yet to decide which boundary to enforce, but either one will achieve the Government's objective,' Mr Nixon said.

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# Extract of Prime Minister's opening address to the second World Wilderness Congress, Cairns, Queensland

*9 June 1980*

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... I would like to pay tribute to the continuing interest of the Queensland Premier, Mr Bjelke-Petersen, in the National Parks and Wildlife Service. His support is well known. It deserves acknowledgment. In co-operation with his Government, plans are well advanced in the proclamation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, a marine wilderness of international standing.

Already an important area at the southern end of the reef—the Capricornia Section—has been proclaimed and a zoning plan has been developed for it which has also recently been released for public comment.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is now moving towards the proclamation of the next section of the Reef—in the vicinity of Cairns—and invitations have been extended to the public to submit their views on this proposal.

The Great Barrier Reef has been recognised as part of the natural heritage of Australia and later this month will be entered into the Register of the National Estate maintained by the Australian Heritage Commission.

This action obliges Commonwealth Government Ministers, departments and agencies to ensure that any actions which they propose to make, which may have an adverse effect on the Great Barrier Reef, as part of the National Estate, are proceeded with only after the most careful consideration and then only if there is no prudent and feasible alternative.

However, we have made it clear on a number of occasions, and I repeat the commitment today, that it is our intention to protect the Reef and its ecosystems from danger of any kind. We will not allow oil drilling on or near the Barrier Reef while there is the slightest risk of harm to the Barrier Reef arising from such drilling.

The international significance of the Great Barrier Reef is widely known—not only as the location of the largest coral reefs in the world but also as a major and growing tourist attraction.

Because we wish to emphasise its role and status even further, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments have under discussion a proposal that the Reef be nominated for the World Heritage List—a list of properties forming part of the world's natural and cultural heritage.

Discussions on this matter are proceeding and I have provided the Queensland Government with further details concerning the proposal.

I have no doubt that the Reef will be accepted for inclusion on this list and I am hopeful that an announcement will be made to this effect shortly.

I know that all Australians feel confident that the Great Barrier Reef will take its place with other great natural wonders of the world such as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park and the Galapagos Islands.

I am equally confident that such a listing will provide a strong stimulus to international tourism in Queensland . . .



## Support material for various activities

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### Fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef Region

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The commercial fishing industry of the Great Barrier Reef Region provides a livelihood for approximately 1000 people on fishing boats and a substantial number of shore-based process workers. There is an associated infrastructure of engineering, radio and electronics, slipways, ship-building, ship chandlery etc. businesses which also benefit from the industry. The total value of production from the Region is in the order of \$10–12 million annually landed value, which is worth about twice as much in processed form on domestic and export markets. The Barrier Reef Region each year produces around 2000 tonnes of finned fish (worth approximately \$2 million landed value), 3000 tonnes of prawns (\$7.5 million), 150–200 tonnes of crabs (\$400 000), 600–700 tonnes scallops (\$360 000) and 50–100 tonnes of Moreton Bay lobsters (\$80 000–180 000) through the commercial fishing industry.

The fishing industry in the Barrier Reef province can be divided into four sectors

- reef fisheries proper
- inner shelf fisheries
- coastal and estuarine fisheries
- culture operations

At present coral reefs provide catches of reef fish, aquarium fish, coral, shells and tropical rock lobsters for both professional and amateur operators. Mackerel and other pelagic fishes are caught close to reefs. Fishing on these reefs is labour intensive. Most fish are caught by handline; coral, shells and tropical rock lobsters are collected by spear or hand.

The inner shelf zone can be exploited with more sophisticated gear. The bottom is relatively smooth with only isolated coral outcrops. The major fisheries are trawl fisheries for prawns and scallops. Trash fish from trawl fisheries are currently discarded but will probably provide a considerable resource when utilisation becomes economic.

Coastal and estuarine fisheries are carried out with a wide variety of gear. Both food and bait fish and prawns are produced. The juvenile of some reef fish are found in estuaries.

In Queensland the holder of a State professional fishing licence may sell fish for public consumption through the Fish Board. A considerable number of part-time fishermen take advantage of this provision. In some ports these 'part-timers' supply most of the fish available to the public.

In view of the large number of pleasure craft registered in the Barrier Reef Region it is reasonable to infer that the amateur catch is of the same order of magnitude as professional landings, but there are not statistics to support this.

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# World Heritage Convention

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The Galapagos Islands and the City of Quito (Ecuador), Simien National Park and the Rock Hewn Churches at Lalibela (Ethiopia), L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Park and Nahanni National Park (Canada), Aachen Cathedral (Federal Republic of Germany), Island of Goree (Senegal), the Mesa Verde and Yellowstone National Parks (USA), the City of Krakow and the Salt Mine at Wieliczka (Poland) between them share the distinction of being the first twelve places to be included in the recently established World Heritage List.

The World Heritage List, the list of wonders of the contemporary world, is being prepared under the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. This Convention was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1972. The Convention document establishes the administrative machinery—the World Heritage Committee, and a World Heritage Fund—and the procedures for preparing the World Heritage List. There is also provision for a List of World Heritage in Danger, in which are to be included properties appearing on the World Heritage List, for the conservation of which major operations are necessary and for which assistance has been requested under the Convention.

There are no special requirements which apply specifically to places which are included on the World Heritage List. However, a number of general conditions apply to all State signatories. These include the adoption of general policies, the establishment of appropriate organisations and services, and the development of suitable legal, technical, scientific and financial measures, for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage. Each signatory is also required to submit an inventory of property suitable for the list to the World Heritage Committee.

The criteria for listing natural properties such as the Great Barrier Reef are set out below:

– outstanding universal value will be recognised when a natural heritage property is found to meet one or more of the following criteria. Therefore properties should:

- (i) be outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history; this would include sites which represent the major 'eras' of geological history such as the 'ice age' where early man and his environment underwent major changes;
- (ii) be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with the natural environment; as distinct from the periods of the earth's development, this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, landforms and marine and fresh water bodies;
- (iii) contain unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty, such as superlative examples of the most important ecosystems to man, natural features (rivers, mountains, waterfalls), spectacles presented by great concentrations of animals, sweeping vistas covered by natural vegetation and exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements;
- (iv) be habitats where populations of rare or endangered species of plants and animals still survive; this would include those areas where concentrations of plants and animals of universal interest and significance are found.



Sites are to be evaluated for their integrity; that is, the extent to which they contain key interrelated and interdependent elements, are of a size to demonstrate the principal aspects of a natural process and be self-perpetuating, or to provide the habitat requirements that will guarantee the survival of a species.

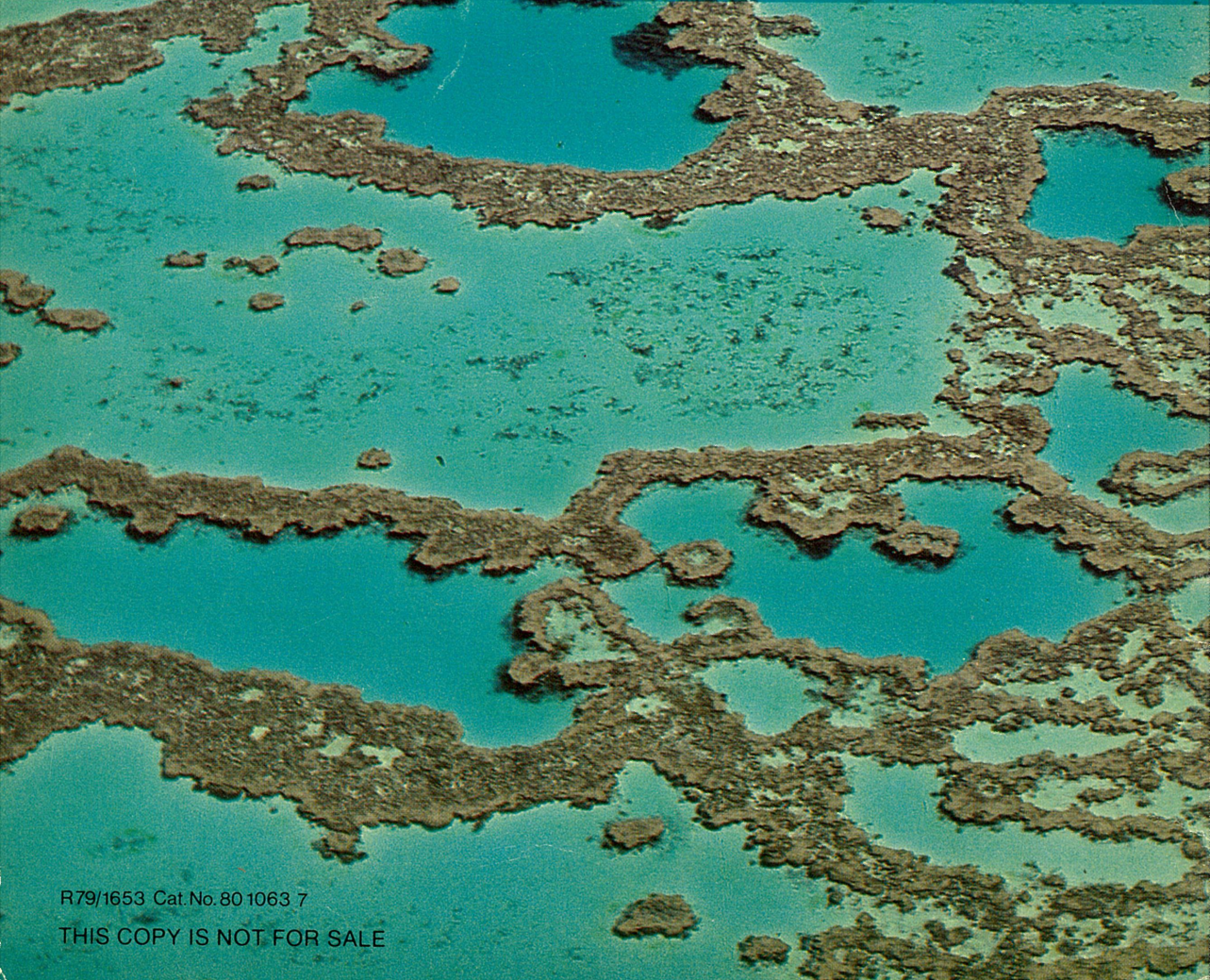
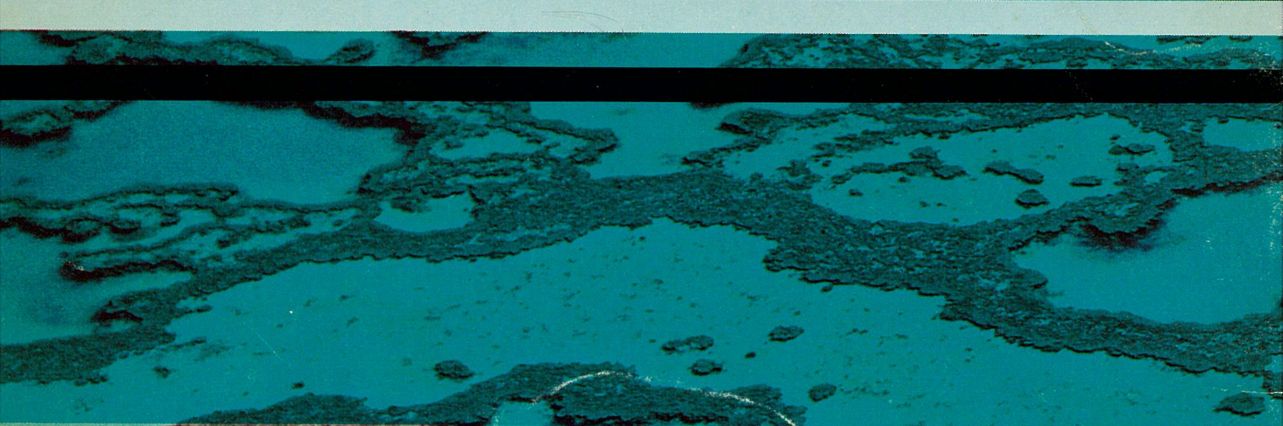
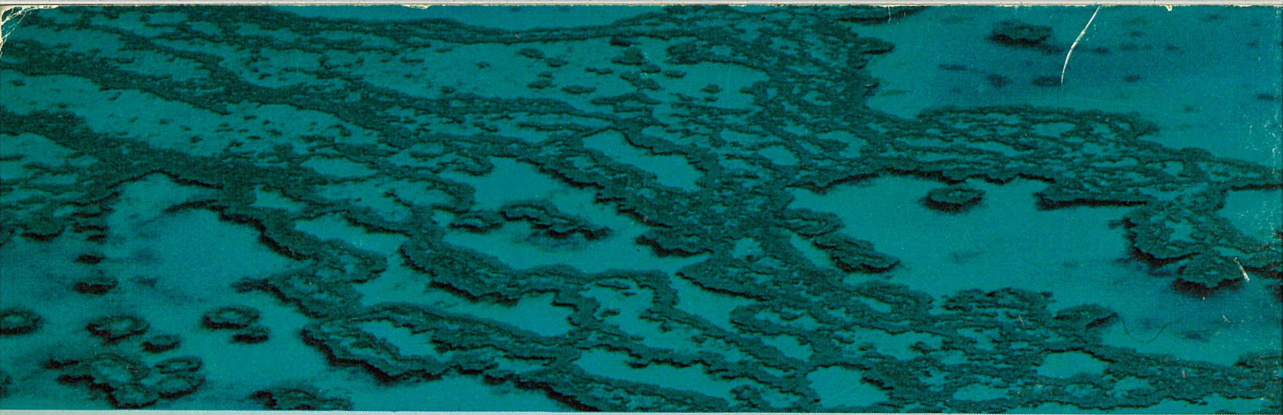
The Great Barrier Reef clearly qualifies under all of these criteria.

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