



BEV
EILEEN
JANE

10

PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

14 JUNE 1979

GREAT BARRIER REEF

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 policies 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 eco-system 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.