



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

21 August, 1979

BUDGET INITIATIVES IN
MARINE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, commented tonight on initiatives which the Government had taken in the field of marine science and technology in the context of the 1979-80 Budget.

Mr Fraser recalled that in his Parliamentary Statement of 4 June 1979 concerning the Government's decisions on petroleum exploration in the Great Barrier Reef he had announced that the Australian Marine Sciences and Technologies Advisory Committee (AMSTAC) had been asked to submit advice on a program of research on the Reef environment for consideration in the Budget context.

AMSTAC, which is a Standing Committee of the Australian Science and Technology Council has reported to the Government on such a program. The report will be tabled in the Parliament shortly.

The Government had decided that \$400,000 will be provided in 1979-80 and the two succeeding financial years for grants in marine science and technology, of which \$300,000 will be devoted to the Great Barrier Reef.

The task of allocating these funds will be undertaken by the Minister for Science and the Environment, Senator Webster, on the advice of the Marine Research Allocations Panel (MARAP). The Prime Minister said that the membership of MARAP will be announced shortly.

Mr Fraser went on to say that additional scientific staff positions with suitable support funding for 1979-80 and the two succeeding years would be provided at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) at Cape Ferguson, near Townsville with the specific objective of accelerating research on the Barrier Reef.

The Government had decided that this research should be directed to the study of environmental processes including physical, chemical and biological oceanography and reef population ecology.

Mr Fraser recalled that the Australian Institute of Marine Science had been set up in 1972 when he was Minister for Education and Science.

The Prime Minister went on to say that these important initiatives were a further step in the Government's commitment to undertake short and longer term research into the Great Barrier Reef which had been suggested by the Chairman of the Royal Commissions into Exploratory and Production Drilling for Petroleum.

The Prime Minister said that in his agreement with the Premier of Queensland on 14 June 1979 it was noted that the research program on the Great Barrier Reef will be monitored by the Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Council and it will be closely supervised by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Mr Fraser concluded by stating that the combination of co-operative arrangements with Queensland and funding of these new initiatives will ensure that the Government's strong commitment to the preservation of this most important part of Australia will be effectively pursued.