



PRIME MINISTER

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LAUNCH OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION KIT
"WILDERNESS: THE ORIGINAL AND THE
BEST OF PLANET EARTH"
MELBOURNE - 14 DECEMBER 1987

It is my pleasure today to launch the Wilderness Society's first environmental education kit entitled "Wilderness: The Original and the Best of Planet Earth".

It is particularly appropriate that we launch this project today, the anniversary of the World Heritage Listing of the South West Tasmanian wilderness.

That area owes its protection in considerable measure to the work of the Wilderness Society - work which my Government was very pleased to cap off in the early days after our election in 1983 with the decision to stop the damming of the Franklin.

The Wilderness Society has been at the forefront of the conservation movement since its formation as the "Tasmanian Wilderness Society" at Bob Brown's house in 1976.

Australia has a special responsibility to follow wise environmental policies, since we have the good fortune - indeed, the privilege - of living in a continent of unsurpassed environmental magnificence. This education kit highlights that fact vividly.

Over the 200 years of European settlement Australia has seen the degradation and outright loss of some important environmental areas.

In more recent years however there has been a growing awareness of the need for a more balanced approach to development, for proper environmental planning and for the protection of valuable areas of Australia's natural heritage.

The Wilderness Society can claim the credit for encouraging this awareness and for ensuring that Governments, businesses and the wider community retain a sense of the importance to all of us of our natural heritage.

The kit you have produced is another example of your capacity to spread the word about our natural treasures.

For its part the Government sees as a key issue the protection of environmentally significant areas for the benefit of present and future generations of Australians while, at the same time, ensuring Australia's economic future. In determining our policies we have sought to achieve an appropriate and sensible balance between legitimate competing interests.

Let me briefly mention two areas with which we are concerned at present which will further advance the cause of environmental protection.

Last week the World Heritage Committee formally accepted Kakadu Stage 2 for World Heritage Listing. This will consolidate the area of Stage 1 that was included on the list in 1981. As you know the listing of Stage 2 only followed protracted but successful action by this Government in the courts.

Last Friday, the Minister for the Environment and the Arts, Senator Richardson, announced the Government's decision to nominate for World Heritage listing the Wet Tropics of North-East Queensland, including the magnificent Daintree Rainforest which I visited earlier this year. The nomination will be submitted shortly and be considered by the World Heritage Committee late next year.

In launching the kit I am particularly gratified to note the support the Wilderness Society has received from the Myer Foundation - a fine example of co-operation in the interests of the wider community.

The kit has been developed for use by secondary school teachers and students with the aim of encouraging students to think critically about environmental issues, particularly by having them consider the values and choices that are inherent in any land use debate.

The colour prints and 90 slides contained in the kit are, as we shall see shortly, outstanding. They offer glimpses of scenes that should inspire anyone to make the effort to visit the real thing. The high quality printing and presentation is most impressive. I can recommend this kit to all educational institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to launch "Wilderness: The Original and the Best of Planet Earth."

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