



(Briefing)

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PRIME MINISTERFOR MEDIA21 OCTOBER 1979ELECTORATE TALK

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 tourists, 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 oversee 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 rites 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.

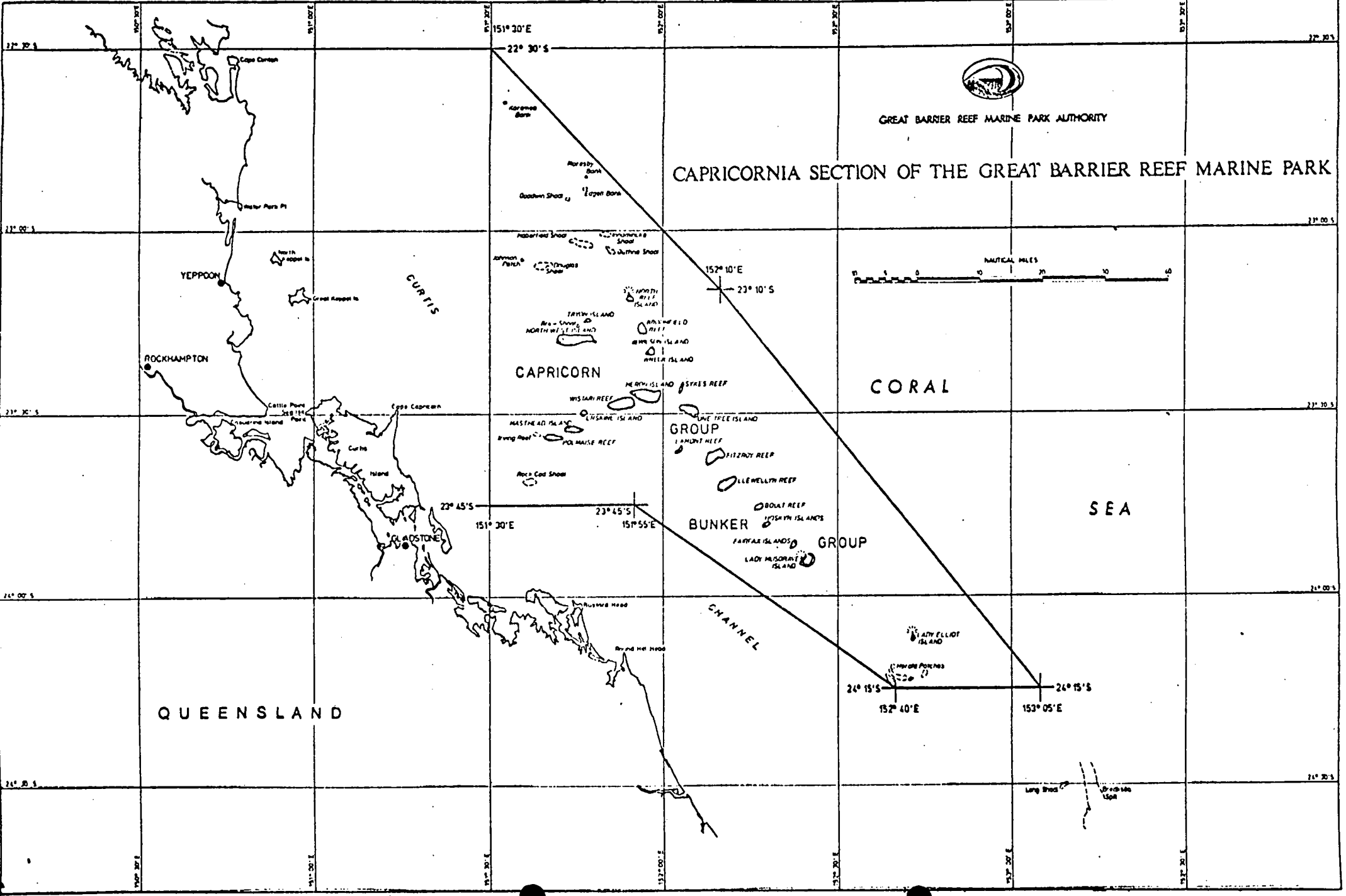
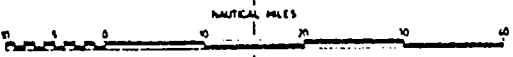
Our commitment to conservation has been demonstrated, not by empty rhetoric, but by determined and positive action. This first proclamation and our commitment to future development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park underlines our determination to secure the Australian environment for all Australians,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



GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

CAPRICORNIA SECTION OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK



22° 00' S 22° 30' S 23° 00' S 23° 30' S 24° 00' S 24° 30' S

151° 30' E 152° 00' E 152° 30' E 153° 00' E 153° 30' E 154° 00' E

22° 45' S 23° 15' S 23° 45' S 24° 15' S

151° 00' E 151° 30' E 152° 00' E 152° 30' E 153° 00' E 153° 30' E

151° 30' E 152° 00' E 152° 30' E 153° 00' E 153° 30' E

Cape Devon
Cape Byron Pt

YEPPOON

ROCKHAMPTON

Cattle Point
Cattle Point Park

QUEENSLAND

CURTIS

CAPRICORN

GROUP

BUNKER

GROUP

CHANNEL

CORAL

SEA

Admiral's Bank
Ripley Bank
Gardner Shoal
Lyster Bank

Parrotfish Shoal
Johnston's Bank
Cottons Shoal

TRIMM ISLAND
NORTH WEST ISLAND
MURKIN ISLAND
WHITE ISLAND

ARLWELL REEF
MURKIN ISLAND
WHITE ISLAND

MERRY ISLAND
WISLARI REEF
MASTHEAD ISLAND
Living Reef
Rock Cod Shoal

SYDNEY REEF
LAME TREE ISLAND
LAMBTON REEF
SIZZARD REEF
LLEWELLYN REEF

BOAT REEF
FARNSWORTH ISLANDS
LADY MARGARET ISLAND

LADY ELLIOT ISLAND

THREE POINTS

Long Shoal

BRANDS LIP