



EMBARGO: 5:00 pm

# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIASUNDAY, 30 NOVEMBER, 1980

## ELECTORATE TALK

Australia is to be the host country next year for the Fifth Session of the World Heritage Committee. This Committee is responsible for considering nominations of cultural and natural sites for inclusion on the world heritage list - an inventory of the wonders of the contemporary world being prepared under the convention concerning the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

The convention, to which Australia is a party, was adopted by the General Conference of U.N.E.S.C.O. in 1972. The session is expected to be held in Canberra in mid-October, 1981, shortly after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting takes place in Melbourne. Invitations are being extended to the 21 member states which constitute the Committee, and to other countries to attend as observers.

Australia has already submitted nominations for the World Heritage List being compiled by the Committee. Two of our great natural assets - Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory, and the Great Barrier Reef, have been nominated. Kakadu, with its wealth of Aboriginal art sites, is one of the first places nominated to the World Heritage List for both its natural and cultural values.

In announcing the Government's intention to nominate Kakadu for possible inclusion on the World Heritage List at the Australian launching of the World Conservation Strategy in March of this year I stated that, "our action today in nominating this national park for these important world listings is a demonstration to the world not only of our belief that Kakadu is a valuable and indeed irreplaceable asset, but also of our commitment to conservation".

Our actions in relation not only to the proclamation of Kakadu National Park and its nomination for World Heritage consideration but also our decisions to ban whaling in Australian waters, to assist in the establishment of the World Wildlife Fund in Australia, to protect endangered species of birds, to preserve - for all time - Fraser Island, and, following the general principles of the World Conservation Strategy, to develop a national conservation strategy for Australia - are but some of the measures we have implemented which demonstrate clearly the importance we place on our conservation policies and programmes.

Our commitment in this regard is clearly demonstrated by our policies for the protection and conservation of the Great Barrier Reef.

These policies include the progressive declaration of sections of the Great Barrier Reef region as a Marine Park, the banning of petroleum exploration from the region, the development of a substantial research programme - through the Australian Institute of Marine Science near Townsville and through marine science research grants - to increase our understanding of the complexities of the Reef's unique eco-system and the establishment of a Commonwealth/Queensland Ministerial Council to oversee the development and implementation of programmes for the protection of the Reef.

It is clearly appropriate that the Great Barrier Reef be considered by the World Heritage Committee at its meeting in 1981 and given the universal esteem in which the Great Barrier Reef is held, it seems very likely that this nomination along with the nomination of Kakadu National Park, will be accepted by this international committee.

The World List, which contains more than 80 places, has the capacity to capture the imagination of people everywhere, being evidence of the finest achievements of past and present civilisations and of our globe's remarkable natural phenomena.

The acceptance of Australia's invitation to host the Fifth Session of the World Heritage Committee will provide us with a unique opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the preservation and development of our unique cultural and natural environment.

It also represents an international recognition of the important role we are playing in the field of preservation of Australia's heritage.

I hope that it will prove possible for the members of the World Heritage Committee to visit both the Kakadu National Park and the Great Barrier Reef to witness at first hand their tremendous features which have been universally acclaimed.