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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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ELECTORATE TALK

During the World Heritage Committee Meeting at the Sydney Opera House last week, the Great Barrier Reef, the Kakadu National Park in Arnhem Land, and the Willandra Lakes region in western N.S.W. were inscribed on the World Heritage List. This list is made up of natural sites and man-made properties which are judged by the Committee, using the highest standards, to be of outstanding universal value to the whole of mankind. The sites and properties previously on the list range from the pyramids in Egypt to the Grand Canyon in the United States, from the Palace of Versailles to the Katmandu Valley, and from the ancient city of Damascus to the Galapagos Islands in Equador.

The Barrier Reef, the Kakadu Park and the Willandra Lakes Region are worthy additions to a list which now numbers 111 sites and properties right around the world, and two other particularly important additions to the list at the Sydney Meeting were the famous Serengeti Game Park in Tanzania, and the Glaciers National Park, a vast alpine area and glacier in Argentina.

The World Heritage Committee itself is made up of 21 of the 61 countries which are signatories to the U.N. World Heritage Convention. The World Heritage Committee first met in Paris in 1977 and the fact that the 1981 meeting was held in this country is a tribute to Australia's concern for conservation and for the environment.

The official UNESCO representative at the meeting spoke in glowing terms of how much Australia is doing to preserve the natural and cultural heritage and of the constant desire of Australia to promote international co-operation in this field. The interest of Australians in conservation and heritage issues is long-standing and it is broadly-based. Some field naturalist clubs date back to the early part of this century. The National Trust movement has a membership of about 80,000, and the total membership of nature conservation bodies runs to a quarter of a million. The Commonwealth Government has put its weight behind many major conservation and heritage initiatives. And our children will inherit a better Australia, and to an extent a better world, as a result of what the Government has achieved.

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