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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

16 NOVEMBER 1990

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE QUEENSLAND PREMIER, WAYNE GOSS

The three year campaign to protect Queensland's Wet Tropics World Heritage area culminated today in the signing of an agreement giving formal status to the management scheme for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Following the election in Queensland in December last year we moved quickly to ensure the proper management and conservation of the area.

We met in north Queensland in early March and exchanged letters of intent which affirmed the two Governments' cooperative approach to funding and management of this internationally significant area.

Following this historic agreement a management scheme for the Wet Tropics was negotiated and established.

The signing of the joint Commonwealth-State management arrangement today puts into effect a comprehensive scheme which ensures the protection and management of the area and ensures Australia maintains its international obligations under the World Heritage Convention.

Because of the high level of cooperation, the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council and the Wet Tropics Management Authority had already been established and held their first meetings.

Under the Wet Tropics Agreement, both Governments are committed to ongoing funding on a matching basis.

A total of \$11 million has been provided for management of the World Heritage Area by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments this year.

The agreement also commits the Queensland Government to the introduction of legislation to enable its implementation.

The Wet Tropics Management Agency, charged with managing the area, will be established under new Queensland legislation and consist of approximately 10 professional coordination and planning staff.

Queensland will be responsible for the day-to-day and on-ground management operations within the area.

Queensland is in the unique position of having adjacent World Heritage Areas - the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef - and we are keen to see the two management authorities work together to present and protect these internationally significant and unique environmental sites.