

## 1980 CABINET PAPERS

# Joh fought Barrier Reef heritage listing

### ENVIRONMENT

THE Joh Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland furiously opposed the World Heritage declaration of the Great Barrier Reef 30 years ago, arguing that only sections of it should be protected.

Newly released state cabinet documents from 1980 show that the coalition government was dead against the reef's listing in 1981.

Queensland Public Works Minister Robert Schwarten, who released the cabinet documents, said the Bjelke-Petersen government had intended to do exploratory mining on the reef for oil.

The idea of listing the reef, originally raised in January 1978, was to be debated by the Australian Heritage Commission in February 1980.



**Joh Bjelke-Petersen**

there are areas of differing conservation potential," the letter said.

"... It would be appropriate, therefore, to list only areas of prime ecological significance on the register as they are assessed and identified by the Great Barrier

A month before that, cabinet resolved to send a letter to the commission reaffirming the Queensland government's objection.

It said the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority already existed to assess the "conservation, management and economic potential" of the area.

"By examining the Great Barrier Reef region by region, the authority has acknowledged that

Reef Marine Park Authority."

Mr Schwarten said it was interesting to compare the environmentally-aware world of today to 1980, when the environmental debate began in Queensland.

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest World Heritage Area and the most extensive coral reef system, celebrated for its rich biological diversity.

AAP

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