MEDIA RELEASE

DARWIN SATURDAY:

Opposition Leader Terry Smith today called on the Government to come clean and tell taxpayers how much of their money is being demanded by the Japanese backers of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway.

Mr Smith says Chief Minister Marshall Perron has no right to keep it a secret after his talks in Tokyo.

"He went there to get a clear picture of where the project stands," Mr Smith said.

"But when he came back all he would tell us was that the Japanese financiers are demanding the Territory taxpayers pay part of the cost.

"He has conceded the deal does not stack up commercially and that Government involvement is therefore necessary.

"The Japanese financiers know how much they want and Mr Perron knows how much they want.

"It's taxpayers' money they are talking about and Mr Perron has no right to keep us in the dark while he keeps the negotiations rolling.

"I want a clear statement from Mr Perron that sets out:
How much money the financiers are demanding.
What are the terms and conditions.
Where will the money go: in construction or operational costs.
Where will the money come from.
What is the calculated return on investment.

"Railnorth was supposed to have produced a full feasibility report months ago and the Government was supposed to have made the findings public.

"Mr Perron may be satisfied with Railnorth's handling of the project, but I'm not satisfied with his continued refusal to come clean.

"The Government, Railnorth and the financiers have had the deal on the table for more than a year now and they know exactly where they stand.

"It's time the taxpayers were allowed to look over their shoulder and see just what sort of deal they're talking about.

"Everybody is in favour of the rail link in principle and we want to know now whether it can be supported in practice.

"If Mr Perron wants that support, he should not use the same secretive approach that got us into so many deals that backfired on the taxpayer."
"He has plenty of time between now and the last sittings of the Parliament for this year to prepare a clear and open statement.

"If he cannot produce that statement then he cannot expect us to believe that the deal is either acceptable or viable."