MEDIA RELEASE

THE CHIEF MINISTER
HON. MARSHALL PERRON, MLA

Railways

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Chief Minister Marshall Perron today reaffirmed the Territory Government's financial commitment to the Alice Springs-to-Darwin railway project.

Mr Perron told a railway summit conference in Whyalla the Territory had pledged $100 million to the project, the bulk to be spent on construction of a new Darwin port.

A new purpose-built port designed to integrate with a modern rail system is considered to be vital to the viability and efficiency of the railway.

The Chief Minister, a keynote speaker at the Whyalla summit, said there was now no doubt the railway project was economically viable from the national viewpoint, and that the line could be operated commercially at a profit.

This had been independently confirmed by the Australian National Report completed in January this year. The AN report quantified substantial national benefits and concluded operating profits from year one.

"Taxpayers won't have to dig into their pockets in any year to subsidise it," Mr Perron said.

He said the best chance for construction of the railway now was with the Coalition's Rebuild Australia Fund.
He said the project had been referred to the Ralph Committee for urgent assessment, and he had been assured by Dr Hewson it would receive early consideration if the Coalition took up the reins on government on March 14.

"That's a hell of a lot better than anything that Paul Keating and the ALP have promised to date," he told the summit.

ENDS

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(NOTE: Copies of Chief Minister's speech available on request).