SA leaders back Perron rail push

By TONY NELSON

Chief Minister Marsh- all Perron claimed the support of South Australian political leaders yesterday for the Alice Springs-Darwin rail link to be recognised as a national issue.

Mr Perron was in Adelaide on a two-day campaign to present the rail as a federal obligation.

The Chief Minister said he had gained the backing of SA Premier Lynn Arnold and Opposition Leader Dean Brown.

But Prime Minister Paul Keating appeared cold on the issue during press interviews late yesterday.

Mr Keating said the Commonwealth would consider a viable project funded by the private sector.

But South Australia would be better served by building the standard gauge Adelaide-Melbourne rail link outlined in the One Nation statement.

Mr Perron ... support from SA leaders.

Mr Perron wrote to Mr Keating this week outlining the benefits to the Commonwealth of the railway, completing the south-north link from Adelaide to Darwin.

He also sent information kits to South Australian politicians and business and union leaders, urging their support.

He asked all South Australian candidates in the federal election to "badger their leaders for a commitment to this project".

However, because of employment, military, environment, tax and other concerns, the whole of Australia would benefit from the link, it said.

Mr Perron spoke yesterday to senior federal and State politicians from both major parties and senior business people.

Today he will meet trade union leaders, and address a luncheon organised by the Chamber of Commerce.

The time was right for the people of South Australia to demand the Commonwealth honour the agreement first made in 1907 to complete the Adelaide-Darwin link, Mr Perron said.

"That link will provide the gateway to the booming markets of Asia for South Australia," he said.

However, Mr Keating said South Australia would be best served by the standard gauge link which would pull "tightly into the eastern States economy."