Land Acquisition for Railway

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

A corridor of land will be required for the railway that will pass through the Northern Territory. Knowing that this proposed corridor will pass over freehold land in several places, who will acquire the land, the Northern Territory government or the Commonwealth government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the agreement which exists between the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government in relation to the corridor from Alice Springs to Darwin, to the best of my recollection, requires that the Northern Territory government as its part in support of this act of national faith will indeed provide the corridor for the project. This will mean that the Northern Territory government will acquire the area of land required to enable the corridor to be settled. I hope to be in a position fairly shortly to announce at least the actual properties. We have held up a number of subdivisional applications until such time as the corridor is quite clear. Hopefully, we will have information for the public on that subject soon. Honourable members will be well aware that the corridor may, in fact, cross Aboriginal inalienable freehold and the Northern Territory government has no power whatsoever to acquire such land. That land will have to be acquired by the Commonwealth as it is the only instrumentality in this country that has the power.