QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE – Thursday 4 June 1981

Mr D.W COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What contribution is the Department of Mines and Energy making towards the Alice Springs Railway survey?

ANSWER

The department will be contributing the services of the Northern Territory geological survey in 3 phases of the railway project. Its geologists will be working in conjunction with the Australian National Railways, the Surveyor-General’s Department of the Commonwealth and our own Department of Transport and Works. Phase 1 will be the determination of the route. This work has begun and involves geologists in studies of published geological maps, ground location studies and airborne reconnaissance surveys. As the work becomes further defined, detailed geological mapping will be done of a corridor some 5 to 12 kilometres wide. This is a major and time-consuming exercise and has already been commenced between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. The other 2 phases involving the geological survey will follow. These are the search for railway building materials and the investigation of subsurface characteristics at bridge sites and cutting sites. This will involve engineering geologists in geophysical surveys of specific sites where they will use both seismic and electrical methods. It will also involve them in investigative drilling for the design of bridge foundations and an exploration for and testing of materials for building the railway. Quarry site investigations have already commenced. Apart from the railway work, the geological survey is presently engaged on a long-term program of airborne geophysical surveys. These are currently being done in the Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Darwin regions and will be particularly useful in the definition of rock types along the route. This will help in identifying useful materials and suitable foundation. In all, the geological survey will be involved to the degree of using 10% of its staff resources for a period of 2 years on the survey project.