MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER FOR THE RAILWAY
HON BARRY COULTER, MLA

Ref: C-0062-96  Date: Thursday 8 February 1996

NT Railway Minister Barry Coulter is undertaking a week-long visit to the United States to discuss the Alice Springs to Darwin rail project with leading American railway operators and international shipping companies.

Mr Coulter will be joined for the discussions by private sector project proponent Daewoo and their financial advisers, Bank of America.

He said interest in the NT rail project was high among international railway operators, and the time was right for detailed discussions about the best manner in which a railway could operate profitably.

"The Australian Government, no matter who wins next month's Federal election, will support an economically viable NT rail project," the Minister said.

"We have reworked the figures and the models to establish the project's economic viability. Now we need to talk to successful operators who know how to run railways profitably, and perhaps involve them in participating in the day-to-day running of the NT railway."

Mr Coulter said Daewoo's exclusivity arrangement with the NT Government would expire in April, but the company would remain in an outstanding position to compete for project construction in an open tender process.

"I want to be able to talk facts, figures and details with the Commonwealth as soon as possible after the election," he said. "Involvement of a respected railway operator, either international or Australian, could well be influential in those discussions."

Mr Coulter leaves for the US on the weekend.

ENDS

Contact Neil Dibbs 99 6552