MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER FOR THE AUSTRALASIA RAILWAY
HON BARRY COULTER MLA

RAILWAY CORRIDOR AGREEMENT ON ABORIGINAL LAND

The Northern Territory Government and the Northern and Central land councils have signed a heads of agreement to secure access for the Adelaide to Darwin railway through the Territory.

NT Railway Minister Barry Coulter said today the agreement followed 18 months of extensive negotiations, and would involve a 99-year lease (renewable for a further 99 years) of a corridor 100 metres wide through Aboriginal land at no rent.

It contains a $7.4 million package made up of the following:

- compensation payment of $3 million for all Aboriginal interests in land, including land claims and native title.
- amelioration costs of $2.4 million for the impact of railway construction on Aboriginal landholders, to be identified by a Railway Impact Study costing $140,000 and conducted by the land councils.
- replacement of housing at a cost of $500,000.
- a communities development package of $1 million for capital works (e.g. roads) on communities affected by the railway.
- contribution of $360,000 to the land councils to assist consultation with Aboriginal landholders.

The agreement remains subject to ratification by Aboriginal landholders who will be consulted by the land councils.

Northern Territory Government

Contact: Neil Dibbs 89 996552
Mr Coulter described the agreement as a satisfactory outcome following lengthy negotiations which had not always run smoothly.

"This compensation package is based on the same terms and conditions which were applied to all railway land acquisition negotiations through the length of the Northern Territory," he said.

"It is a just and equitable package compensating people for loss of land title and for the effects and impact of railway construction and operation.

"It means relocation and adjustment for some communities, and the Government has always been prepared to offer just compensation in such cases.

"I believe the end result is fair to all parties."

Mr Coulter said security of the corridor was the final obstacle in the Territory Government’s preparations for railway construction.

"It clears the way for the commercial processes to get under way," he said.

"It is anticipated that the short-listed consortia to build, own and operate the railway will be named within days.

"They can make their final plans with the knowledge that final clearance of the corridor is very near completion."

Under the terms of the agreement, all land claims affecting the corridor will be withdrawn. Access to extractive minerals plus ballast is also granted to a 400 metres wide construction corridor and at other nominated sites.

It is proposed that secure title to enable the railway to proceed will be finalised by May 31, following consultation by the land councils with landholders.

ENDS