THREE CONSORTIA WIN THE RIGHT TO BID FOR ADELAIDE TO DARWIN RAILWAY

South Australian and Northern Territory-based companies are among participants in the three consortia who have won the right to bid for the Adelaide to Darwin Railway.

South Australian Premier John Olsen and Northern Territory Chief Minister Shane Stone today announced the shortlist of consortia to proceed to the next stage of bidding.

They are:

**The Asia Pacific Transportation Consortium**
Key Participants: Brown & Root Engineering and Construction Pty Ltd, incorporating Kinhill Pty Ltd, Hutchison Fort Holdings and Genesee & Wyoming.
Key advisers include: Bankers Trust Australia Limited.

**Southern Cross Consortium**
Key Participants: Henry Walker Group Limited, a major Bruneian finance institution and Australian Transport Network, which comprises Wisconsin Central Transportation Corporation, Tranz Rail Holdings, Fay, Richwhite & Company Limited and Berkshire Partners.
Key advisers include: Macquarie Bank Limited and The Hongkong & Bank of Australia Limited in association with HSBC Securities Inc.

**The Northlink Consortium**
Key Participants: Thiess Contractors Pty Limited and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.
Key advisers include: BHP Engineering.

The three consortia now proceed to the second-round submission phase, during which they undertake detailed analysis of the project.

They each have until 30 October to make final submissions to the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, which will evaluate submissions and make recommendations to the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments.
Mr Olsen says the quality of the shortlist will dispel even the greatest cynics in South Australia.

"The fact that South Australian and Northern Territory companies are among the shortlisted consortia is a credit to the expertise of those companies.

"This is an historic project which, after far too long, will proceed, thanks to the commitment from the Federal Government, Northern Territory and South Australian Governments.

"If all goes to plan I would be hopeful that work would commence at the end of the first quarter next year.

"It is a project which will provide 2000 jobs, many of these in South Australia, and will provide a significant focus as we head towards the next millennium."

Mr Stone was also pleased to see the involvement of a Territory company in the shortlisted consortia, which represent a broad range of national and international companies.

"Territorians have been working for 15 years to bring this project to fruition, and they will be pleased to see the project take a major step forward with this announcement today.

"This is a major infrastructure project, not only for the Northern Territory but for the whole of Australia.

"The 1410km of new track from Alice Springs to Darwin will cost more than $1 billion, linking to the new Port of Darwin to complete the AustralAsia Trade Route between Australia and its major Asian trading partners.

"All that remains is for the agreement with the land councils to be ratified by Sunday May 31 to complete the deal."

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Background Information on 3 Consortums attached
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Today's announcement is part of a submission and evaluation process which started in August last year when the Prime Minister announced a $100 million Commonwealth commitment to the Adelaide to Darwin railway.

This contribution matches the $100 million pledged by each the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments, giving the railway a $300 million public equity boost.

More than 30 submissions were received from over 60 Australian and international companies wishing to build the project.

Since then the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, a corporation set up by the NT and SA Governments to administer the railway project, has undertaken a detailed evaluation of submissions before recommending a shortlist of consortia to proceed to the next stage.

Last week another crucial step was taken towards the $1 billion project, with the signing of a heads of agreement between the Northern Territory Government and the Northern and Central Land Councils to address Aboriginal land and Native Title issues on the railway corridor.