MEDIA RELEASE

MIKE REED
TREASURER
Railways

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A concrete sleeper and rail welding plant will be established in Katherine to supply materials to the Alice to Darwin railway, Treasurer Mike Reed announced today.

The town will be a construction base for the $1.2 billion project, with track work being undertaken simultaneously north and south of Katherine.

Mr Reed said the construction of 1410 kilometres of new railway in only three years would generate enormous business activity in the town.

Nine bridge construction crews of up to 15 workers will build 113 bridges, including two of the largest bridges required for the rail project over the Katherine and Edith Rivers, each 240 metres in length.

Work on the bridges is a priority for the consortium, with bridges needing to be completed a full three months before track laying to ensure a smooth construction timetable.

During the actual laying of track, scheduled to start in 2001, Katherine will also function as a supply depot as well as manufacturing 12,500 sleepers a week from the new factory.

Six mobile construction camps will be working at any one time, with a total of 16 actual camp locations and a capacity of between 30 to 250 workers.

Mr Reed said Katherine would also be well placed to cater for the recreational needs of the railway workforce, with employees looking to the local tourism industry and entertainment venues to make the best of their time off.

"Katherine has a vibrant and varied tourism industry which will grasp the opportunity presented by an influx of people working on the railway."
"The regional economy of Katherine will become one of the most prosperous in Australia as it develops its important role in the construction of a huge $1.2 billion project.

"The injection of workers and materials from around the country and the local development of a on-site manufacturing of railway sleepers will ensure Katherine will play a major role in an internationally significant infrastructure project," he said.

Mr Reed has always been a strong supporter of the railway and his letter to constituents in the lead up to the 1997 Territory election demonstrates his confidence that the project could happen.

"It has now happened and over the next three years, Katherine and Territory businesses will be going flat out," he said.

Construction requirements of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway include:
- 155,000 tonnes of steel rail;
- 15 kilometres of concrete culvert pipe;
- 2.2 million cubic metres of ballast;
- 240,000 cubic metres of pre-stressed concrete;
- 15 million cubic metres of earth works; and 2.3 million sleepers;
- 113 new bridges;
- 1,412 new culverts; and
- buildings and workshops costing $26 million.

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