May 16, 1997

RAILWAY MEETING

Acting Chief Minister Mike Reed has announced a meeting on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway will be held between the Prime Minister, the South Australian Premier and Northern Territory Chief Minister in Sydney next month.

The meeting follows an announcement in the Federal Budget handed down on May 13 of the Federation Fund for major projects to celebrate the Centenary of Federation.

The Federation Fund will be the major item for discussion during the meeting in Sydney on Friday June 6.

Mr Reed said he believed the railway project meets the criteria required to access the fund.

"I have written to Mr Howard today highlighting the reasons why the project should be provided with funding:

The railway will:

• be a major infrastructure project that will enhance communication and transport links, not only within Australia, but also with our northern neighbours;

• generate some 2,000 jobs in both the Northern Territory and South Australia;

• commence in 1998 and be well on the way to completion in the Centenary of Federation year; and

• have financial support from both the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments, but will be constructed and operated by a private developer with substantial equity in the project."

Mr Reed also provided the Prime Minister with estimates of the amount of materials which would be required for the project:

• 155,000 tonnes of steel rail and 3,500 tonnes of structural steel;
• 9.2 million spring steel fasteners;
• 2.3 million sleepers from 170,000 tonnes of steel or 240,000 cubic metres of prestressed concrete;
• 100,000 cubic metres of reinforced concrete;
• 15 kilometres of concrete culvert pipe;
• 2 million cubic metres of ballast; and
• 17 million cubic metres of earthworks.

Mr Reed said Australian suppliers will be given every opportunity to become involved in the construction of the railway.

"The rail project has reached a stage where it is almost ready for the involvement of private sector equity partners.

"A final commitment from the Federal Government is the only remaining hurdle before the railway gets the green light."

Mr Reed said the Northern Territory Government would present a strong case for Centenary of Federation funding for the Railway project.

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