MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER FOR THE RAILWAY
HON BARRY COULTER MLA

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INLAND RAILWAY NEEDS TERRITORY LINKS

Northern Territory Railway Minister Barry Coulter says proponents of an inland railway from Melbourne to Darwin must talk to the successful bidder for the Adelaide to Darwin railway project.

"It's a matter of simple logistics," Mr Coulter said today. "The Melbourne to Darwin link, if and when it happens, would have to use 1500 kilometres of railway line in the Northern Territory - 500k between Tennant Creek and the Queensland border and 1000k between Tennant Creek and Darwin.

"It means about one-third of the Melbourne-Darwin railway would in fact be in the Northern Territory - and one-third of the Territory component would be a line to be built and operated by the Adelaide to Darwin railway.

"If they want to join into our railway, somebody will have to talk to us fairly soon about a wide range of complex issues if they are going to make any meaningful progress."

Mr Coulter has written immediately to Federal Transport Minister John Anderson, asking him to put in place a process for keeping the Territory informed of the deliberations of the Federal Government Support Committee announced yesterday to progress the Melbourne-Darwin inland proposal.

He reminded Mr Anderson the deadline for the receipt of submissions on the Adelaide to Darwin railway was 31 March, and that a successful consortium was expected to be announced mid-year.

"Any involvement of another railway in the Territory would have to include the company operating the Adelaide to Darwin line," he said.

"The other railway would have to address a myriad of issues such as environmental clearance, land tenure and planning matters. I expect the proponents will want to consult us about that, as well as access issues to the line to be built in the Territory.

"I note the Prime Minister has indicated Federal legislation could be passed to facilitate the project, and I would be most interested to talk to Mr Anderson about the implications of that," he said.

ENDS

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