MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER FOR RAILWAY
HON BARRY COULTER, MLA

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RAILWAY READY TO GO

Construction of a railway between Alice Springs and Darwin is expected to start before the end of 1998, NT Railway Minister Barry Coulter announced today.

Expressions of interest in building, owning and operating the railway will be sought through national and international advertising starting on Wednesday 27 August.

Selected consortia will be invited to submit detailed proposals in January next year, and the successful consortium will be announced in August next year.

It is expected the railway will be operating in 2002.

Mr Coulter said 18 months of demanding preparation meant the process of building the railway was ready to start immediately.

"We've only been waiting for the word from the Prime Minister," he said. "We are on the launch pad today and we are hitting the 'go' button."

Mr Coulter also announced today the principal positions on the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, the vehicle which will oversee the railway planning and construction process.

Chairman is Mr Rick Allert AM, a prominent South Australian businessman with longstanding Northern Territory affiliations. He is chairman of brewing company Southcorp, a Coles-Myer director, chairman of the Ayers Rock Resort Corporation and a board member of many other corporations.

Chief Executive Officer is Mr Paul Tyrrell, head of the NT Department of Transport and Works, who has a had a close association with all aspects of the project for some years.

Three other ARC members will be announced shortly.

Mr Coulter said the political lobbying stage of the project was now thankfully over, and the task ahead was all about detail.
"After 11 years of trying to persuade various Federal Governments to commit to the project, I look forward to putting the nuts, bolts and sleepers of the railway together," he said.

"National and international interest in our railway has been tremendous. Now it’s time to find out whether that interest can be converted to private sector action.

"The expressions of interest phase of the campaign will tell us the truth of it."

Mr Coulter said Federal Government support for the project included a promise from the Prime Minister of infrastructure legislation to ensure acquisition of land required for railway construction if this proved necessary.

The Adelaide to Darwin railway project will require 2000 construction workers and will create another 200 jobs in the operation phase.

The 1410 kilometres construction project will cost about $1.08 billion.

It will integrate with Darwin’s new deep water port at East Arm and principally carry container freight.

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