MEDIA RELEASE

CHIEF MINISTER
MARSHALL PERRON

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The Chief Minister says a national commitment must be made to a Darwin to Alice Springs railway if Australia is serious about developing, populating and defending the North.

Mr Perron was giving the opening address to the 15th Australian Road Research Board conference in Darwin today, and speaking to the conference theme of "Making Australia Stronger and Greater".

The Chief Minister said the railway would complete a land bridge between southern Australia and the markets of Asia and beyond, reducing costs and transit time for imports from Europe and Asia while enhancing exports of seasonal and perishable commodities by cutting travelling times.

He said in 1917 the Commonwealth invested the equivalent of $500 million in the east-west rail link and an equal commitment, with private sector support, would allow the Territory to complete a competitive north-south link which would turn the Territory into one of the great growth areas of the 21st Century.

The Chief Minister confirmed that while the Territory Government planned a railway based on private enterprise, a contribution from the Commonwealth was needed for a project which would work to the advantage of the nation.

He said a national commitment to the railway and other northern transport infrastructure was essential for Australia to become stronger and greater.

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