LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Railways.


ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY

Prime Minister Howard must urgently declare his support for the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, and show his willingness to increase the Commonwealth's financial support for the project.

Mr Beazley, and his State and Territory counterparts, Mr Rann and Ms Martin, said we are now entering a critical period which would determine the fate of the proposal to complete the rail link between Alice Springs and Darwin.

Clare Martin said: "The project must not be allowed to stall at this late stage. This week is crucial because we expect to learn what level of finance the preferred bidder, Asia Pacific Transport Consortium, is willing to contribute to the project."

Mike Rann said: "This is John Howard's chance to prove he genuinely wants this project to go ahead. He must prove that to the people of South Australia and the Northern Territory by strongly supporting the rail-link and providing more Commonwealth funding."

Federal Leader Kim Beazley said: "Labor has always strongly supported the proposal to finish the north-south rail link. At the 1998 Federal Election, Labor committed $100 million to the project. And we also said that beyond 2001-02, we would provide additional funding, up to a total of $300m, if such funding was required."

Federal Labor and Labor in SA and the NT have always been confident that building the Alice Springs to Darwin railway will bring significant economic benefits to SA and NT, and Australia as a whole.

Further, we believe that the current circumstances of Australia's involvement in Timor and the role being played by Darwin, emphasise the importance and
the urgency of finishing this vital rail project. Mr Howard must give the project the support and assurances it needs.

CANBERRA
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