



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY, 14 JANUARY 1983

ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY BY 1988

The Commonwealth Government has decided that the Alice Springs to Darwin railway will be completed by 1988 - Australia's Bicentennial Year.

This rail link will be of tremendous economic, social and defence significance to Australia and will be the largest current railway development project in the world. It will be completed at a cost of \$545 million.

There are 1,440 kilometres of track to be laid, almost twice the length of the new Tarcoola to Alice Springs railway. During the construction phase it will provide employment, both directly and indirectly, for over 1,250 people.

The project will be of particular significance to South Australia and the Northern Territory. For example, about 150,000 tonnes of steel rail will be required from Whyalla and more than 2½ million concrete or steel sleepers will be needed. This new production will provide much needed job opportunities and a welcome shot in the arm for the steel industry.

The massive undertaking will provide long term benefits for all Australians.

As well as breaking down the isolation of our North, the provision of fast, economic and reliable all-weather rail link, will be a boon to the economic and social development of the area. It will ensure effective competition between all modes of transport to provide the most cost effective movement of goods. It will give greater accessibility for manufacturers, the mining industry and primary producers to domestic and international markets. It will also help this fascinating area of our continent realise its full tourist potential.

I am confident that major development projects such as this capture the imagination of all Australians. They have the potential to stimulate our national pride and confidence. They demonstrate the need for us to set national goals. They reflect our confidence in the future of our great nation.

This project gives effect to an undertaking first made to the nation by the Commonwealth in 1910. It will also bring forward the fulfilment of our 1980 election promise to complete the Alice Springs to Darwin railway in 10 years. We have an obligation to this land, which gives us so much, to ensure that such visionary projects are not just concepts but realities. Only then will we be well placed to reap the rewards of Australia for Australians.