



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

10 DECEMBER 1990

**JOINT STATEMENT BY THE COMMONWEALTH, NEW SOUTH WALES,  
VICTORIAN AND AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS AND  
THE VFT JOINT VENTURE ON PROCESSES FOR GOVERNMENT  
COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF THE VERY FAST TRAIN  
PROPOSAL**

The Prime Minister, the Premiers of New South Wales and Victoria and the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory met in Sydney today with the Joint Venture partners to discuss future arrangements for coordination and facilitation of Government consideration of the Very Fast Train (VFT) project.

The Heads of Government agreed to streamline mechanisms across the four jurisdictions to assess effectively the potential economic, environmental and social impacts of the project. The processes developed today would allow Government to respond quickly and consistently as the information already provided by the VFT Joint Venture is assessed, and as more information on the VFT becomes available.

The four Heads of Government agreed on a joint response to the VFT Joint Venture partners' recent submission to each Government on VFT processes. This will guide the future direction of each Government's involvement with the VFT project, and provide the VFT Joint Venture with a single point of contact on most issues.

Each Government would, of course, retain jurisdiction for areas for which it has sole responsibility and ultimately would be responsible for those decisions. The Heads of Government also reiterated each Government's current position that the VFT concept deserves serious consideration as a private sector project. The VFT Joint Venture has approached the Commonwealth with suggested changes to the tax regime, which the VFT Joint Venture intends to facilitate the financing of infrastructure projects from Australian private sector sources. The proposals are complex and have far reaching implications for the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Government has agreed to consider the proposals and to respond to the Joint Venture early in 1991.

The Joint Venture has now submitted the Project Evaluation Report (PER) to the Commonwealth and State Governments. Issues addressed by the PER include those required for a

decision to advance to Stage two (eg project justification, major route choice, right of way, project finance). The second stage will involve a fully coordinated environmental impact assessment and full public participation.

It was also agreed that the Heads of Agencies group (comprising leading officials from each Government) which exercises a general oversight of Government involvement with the project, will become a standing committee of lead officials to facilitate the VFT evaluation process and act as the Governments' primary liaison point. The Commonwealth Department of Transport and Communications would have the role of chair, and the group would be supported by a joint Commonwealth/State/ACT Task Force.

The four Governments acknowledged the need for public exposure and announced that they encourage public briefings by the Joint Venture and welcome public comments. The Heads of Government noted that a number of public inquiries into the VFT had concluded or were underway, and that there would be full public participation under the Stage two environmental assessment. The Joint Venture will be making all information relevant to Government consideration available to the Governments. It would also be publicly available except where commerciality was at risk.

On timing, the Heads of Government agreed that it should be possible to conclude Stage one with a response to the VFT Joint Venture on the submissions already received by early 1991. The four Heads of Government also agreed to aim for completion of the coordinated environmental assessment process 10 months after the exhibition of the environmental impact statement. This is within the Joint Venture's requirements for completion of the process. The Joint Venture advised that their target date for the start of project operations was 1 December 1997.