



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP

ADELAIDE TO DARWIN RAIL LINK

The Prime Minister announced today that the next Labor Government will commit \$3 million to complete the surveying work necessary for a rail-link between Alice Springs and Darwin.

Such a rail-link has been advocated by various interests for some time, including especially the Northern Territory Government. The Commonwealth Government has told the Northern Territory Government that it would welcome any commercially viable proposal, and indeed would actively facilitate its approval and construction. It would support the investment through infrastructure bonds attracting concessional taxation.

To date, however, commercial proposals have not been forthcoming. Part of the difficulty has been arriving at accurate figures for the cost of building the rail-link. Indeed, the recently formed Australian Rail Development Council has requested Government assistance in completing the surveying and pegging of the route. Of the 1400 kilometres involved, all but 300 kilometres has been surveyed. The next Labor Government is happy to fund the remaining surveying so that the commercial viability of future proposals can be more accurately ascertained.

Labor is committed to an efficient national rail network. We have provided substantial investment in a standard gauge national network through the One Nation funding. We provided additional funds in the budget for the Islington workshops in Adelaide. We have also provided funding for the upgrade of the workshops of Port Augusta, and more importantly, for the refurbishment of the Indian Pacific train.

Our record once again stands in stark contrast to that of the Opposition who simply do not believe in a central role for Government. Fightback! would cut \$87 million from land transport, including \$15 million from Australian National Railways.

ADELAIDE
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