



PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

MESSAGE: INAUGURATION OF THE ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN RAILWAY

Today's inauguration of the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway represents a momentous achievement for all those involved in its planning and construction. The construction of the railway has been the dream of many since Federation, and it is wonderful to now have all mainland capital cities linked by rail.

The Railway will create fantastic opportunities for the Northern Territory, South Australia, and the nation as a whole. With a connection to the Port of Darwin, the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway will create a new transport system linking the south east of Australia with the fast-growing economies of Asia. This trade corridor will enable the transport of goods for export to markets in Asia and beyond. It will also facilitate the development of new businesses and industries in the region.

When *the Ghan* commences operations on the line on 1 February 2004, thousands of tourists will be attracted to this beautiful region to experience one of the world's great transcontinental journeys. Both Australian and foreign tourists alike will have a wonderful opportunity to view the spectacular scenery along the way. Those living in regional towns such as Katherine and Tennant Creek will also benefit from the influx of visitors, and the opportunities they offer for regional businesses and industries.

The completion of the railway is testament to the successful outcomes that can be achieved by governments and the private sector working together. It is the direct result of a cooperative working relationship between the Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory governments, and the Asia Pacific Transport Consortium. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved in the project for their hard work, cooperation and dedication.

(John Howard)