

**Regional Development, Territories
and Local Government**

A Stronger Northern Territory

A Stronger Northern Territory – The Coalition is committed to supporting infrastructure and economic development projects that provide more jobs and build a stronger Northern Territory, and to the Northern Territory becoming a new State in the Australian Federation on 1 January 2001.

A Stronger Northern Territory

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Executive Summary

Part 1 A Stronger Northern Territory

- The Coalition is committed to working with the Northern Territory community to lay the foundations for a stronger Northern Territory.
- The Coalition will continue to support infrastructure and economic development projects that provide more jobs and opportunities for all Territorians.
- The Coalition's approval of the Jabiluka uranium project, subject to stringent environmental and heritage assessments and consultation with the affected Aboriginal communities, will significantly boost jobs, revenue and royalty payments especially to the Aboriginal community.
- The Coalition's \$100 million commitment to the Alice Springs to

Darwin railway will support a project which has the potential to create more than 2,000 jobs during construction and will provide a direct link from Southern areas to Asian markets through the new Darwin port. The railway would provide major new business and economic development opportunities for all Territorians.

Part 2 A New State for a New Century

- The Coalition is committed to building on the Prime Minister's announcement, in August this year, that the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments would work toward the admission of the Northern Territory as a new State to the Australian Federation on 1 January 2001 should this be supported in a referendum.
- The Coalition is committed to an inclusive process of consultation in the lead-up to Statehood – particularly with the Northern Territory aboriginal community on indigenous issues.
- The Coalition will appoint a special Statehood Task Force to ensure a smooth transition to Statehood by 2001. Through the work of the Task Force, and negotiations with all interested parties, the Coalition will work towards:
 - - appropriate representation for the new State in both Houses of the Federal Parliament after 1 January 2001;
 - - appropriate management of, and protection for, the two National Parks in the Northern Territory;
 - - determining a satisfactory process for dealing with uranium mining royalties and indigenous interests;
 - - agreement on the administration of industrial relations powers; and
 - - appropriate electoral and governance arrangements for the communities of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Part 3 A Tax Plan for a Stronger Northern Territory

- The Northern Territory will benefit significantly from the Coalition's Tax Plan:

- - the financial independence of the Northern Territory Government will be improved with access to a secure and growing revenue base;
- - fuel costs for the Northern Territory's mining, petroleum exploration and production, transport and tourism industries will be slashed;
- - export costs will be cut dramatically and Northern Territory exporters will become more competitive internationally; and
- - businesses based in the Northern Territory will share in a \$10 billion reduction in business costs.

Labor's Record

For 13 years Labor stifled economic and constitutional development in the Northern Territory.

Labor's record of interference and obstruction in resource development projects cost the Northern Territory many million of dollars in lost export income and thousands of jobs.

Labor's illogical and faction-driven 'three mines' uranium policy cost Australia jobs and \$5 billion in export income between 1985 and 1995.

Labor did nothing to advance the Alice Springs to Darwin railway project, despite promising action in almost every election from 1983 to 1996.

Labor did nothing in 13 years to advance the Statehood aspirations of Northern Territorians and is again obstructing job generating developments and the move to statehood.

Highlights of the Government's Achievements

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The Coalition approved the Jabiluka uranium project, which is expected to generate economic benefits of \$3.8 billion. Jabiluka and the existing Ranger mine will generate around \$12 billion in revenue over the next 28 years, support up to 1,500 jobs, and provide royalties to local Aboriginal communities.

The Coalition has committed \$100 million to the Alice Springs to Darwin railway – a \$1.5 billion private sector project which is also

backed by the Northern Territory and South Australian governments. The Coalition also indicated its willingness to legislate to enable the Northern Territory Government to acquire, on a non-discriminatory basis, all interests in land required to build the railway

The Alice Springs to Darwin railway project could create more than 2 000 jobs during construction and provide access to Darwin's new port for passenger and freight operators – establishing a direct link from Southern areas to Asian markets and opening up opportunities for major development along the route.

B A New State for a New Century

The Coalition has a proud record of achievement in fostering constitutional development in the Northern Territory.

1961 The Menzies Coalition Government established a Supreme Court for the Northern Territory.

1978 The Fraser Coalition Government put in place *Northern Territory (Self Government) Act*, providing for the establishment of separate political, representative and administrative institutions in the Territory, and giving the Territory control over its own Treasury.

1996 John Howard announced, as a Coalition election policy, that his government will facilitate the grant of Statehood to the Northern Territory.

1998 John Howard announced a 'New State for a New Century' – that the Coalition will introduce necessary legislation to the Parliament to provide for the Northern Territory to become a new State of the Australian Federation on 1 January 2001.

Labor is again obstructing movement towards Statehood.

C A Tax Plan for a Stronger Northern Territory

The Coalition's Tax Plan will improve the Northern Territory's financial independence by providing the Territory with a secure and growing revenue base. The GST revenue that will go to the Territory will:

- provide sustainable revenues to spend on schools, hospitals and police services; and
- permit the abolition of the Territories worst taxes, bank transaction

taxes, certain stamp duties and the ad hoc 'bed tax'.

The Northern Territory economy will also benefit from other elements in the Tax Plan:

- the mining, petroleum exploration and production, transport and tourism industries will benefit enormously from the proposed new tax and excise treatment for fuel (fuel costs will be reduced by \$3.5 billion);
- exporters will become more competitive internationally as exports will be GST-free (\$4.5 billion will be slashed from the cost of producing exports); and
- businesses based in the Northern Territory will share in a \$10 billion reduction in business costs.

A Stronger Northern Territory

A Supporting infrastructure and economic development

The Coalition is committed to working with the Northern Territory community to lay the foundations for a stronger Northern Territory.

The Coalition will continue to support infrastructure and economic development projects that provide more jobs and opportunities for all Territorians.

(i) Jabiluka Uranium Project

The Coalition will continue to support the Jabiluka uranium project and ensure it meets stringent environmental safeguards.

The project will deliver significant economic and social benefits to the Territory. The project is expected to generate economic benefits of \$3.8 billion. Jabiluka and the existing Ranger mine will generate around \$12 billion in revenue over the next 28 years and support up to 1 500 jobs. The project will provide the local Aboriginal community with \$210 million in royalties.

The Coalition's commitment is in stark contrast to Labor's record of interference and obstruction on this and many other resource development projects. Labor's restrictive regulations and illogical,

faction-driven 'three mines' uranium policy cost Australia, and the Northern Territory in particular, billions of dollars in lost export income and thousands of jobs.

The Coalition has released our minerals and energy industries from Labor's shackles and will continue to encourage growth and investment in this crucial sector of our economy.

(ii) Alice Springs to Darwin Railway

The Coalition will maintain its commitment of \$100 million to the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, and work with the private sector project and the governments of the Northern Territory and South Australia, to support private sector development of this vital rail link.

The Coalition has indicated its willingness, if necessary, to legislate to enable the Northern Territory Government to acquire, on a non-discriminatory basis, all interests in land required to build the railway. Labor has given no commitment to support this legislation.

The potential benefits to the Northern Territory community from this project are enormous - more than 2 000 jobs could be created during construction; passenger and freight operators will have access to Darwin's new port; exporters in the Southern parts of the Northern Territory and beyond will have a direct link to Asian markets; and new business and development opportunities will be opened up along the route.

The Coalition's commitment to the railway is in stark contrast to Labor's 13 years of broken promises. Despite promising action on the railway at almost every election since 1983, Labor did nothing – not one sleeper was laid.

The Coalition commitment to upgrading Australia's railway network was underscored by the Prime Minister's appointment of a private sector Rail Futures Task Force to advise on how to progress private sector rail proposals – including proposals for an Inland Rail Bridge between Melbourne and Darwin, travelling through regional Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. This project also carries enormous potential benefits for the Northern Territory.

B A New State for a New Century

(i) The Process for Achieving Statehood

The Northern Territory will be admitted as a new State under section

121 of the Constitution, subject to conditions applied by the Federal Parliament and a successful referendum to be held at the time of the Federal election.

The Coalition is committed to an inclusive process of consultation in the lead-up to Statehood on 1 January 2001 – the centenary of Federation.

Following a successful referendum, the Coalition will appoint a special Statehood Task Force to ensure a smooth transition to Statehood. Through consultation with the Northern Territory Government and all interested parties (including the Northern Territory aboriginal community), the Coalition will ensure that all relevant issues are addressed before legislation is prepared for consideration by the Commonwealth Parliament.

(ii) Special Considerations

A range of sensitive areas of Commonwealth Government interest need to be resolved.

These matters include Aboriginal land rights, payment of mining royalties, ownership of uranium, environmental control of uranium mining, the protection of world heritage areas, the management of two Commonwealth national parks, industrial relations powers and the possible incorporation of the Indian Ocean Territories and the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands into the Northern Territory.

This will be done in full consultation with the communities in both territories and with the Northern Territory Government.