

J.C.M.P.

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Aussie firm back in LRT tendering

The Kowloon-Canton Railway Corpn has reconsidered its decision to exclude an Australian firm from tendering for a light rail transit system in the Tuen Mun-Yuen Long region.

The KCRC had announced that detailed discussions for the \$2 billion project would be confined to the Belgian Ateliers de Constructions Electriques de Charleroi and the British GEC-Gammon consortia.

The Australian Leighton-Comeng Consortium has now been added to that list.

The KCRC's public relations manager, Miss Jenny Fung, said yesterday the decision had been made by the corporation's steering group upon a closer look at the Australian proposal.

Members of the steering group have visited

Australia, Belgium and Britain for talks with the top management of the companies and to assess their systems.

Although the Belgian and British groups' proposals appeared to be attractive during the preliminary assessment, the steering group later found merit in the Australian group's proposal, Miss Fung said.

Five prequalified consortiums had submitted bids at the end of April for the first stage of the LRT project, which will be operational by mid-1988.

The first stage will comprise seven routes on 23 kms of double tracks and 41 stops — about two thirds of the final project.

Despite the addition of the Australian compa-

ny, Miss Fung said the corporation will strive to hand out work contracts for the first stage by next month.

The KCRC's managing director, Mr Peter Quick, had earlier said some of the contenders had been offering attractive fixed-rate Hongkong dollar loan packages with repayment periods stretching beyond 1997.

These offers were impressive in view of the absence of any Government guarantees.

It is understood, however, that not all three front runners are offering such deals.

Nevertheless, KCRC officials stressed there is scope for changes in the coming weeks when discussions get down to finer details of the respective proposals.