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# NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

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**CLARE MARTIN MLA**

Chief Minister

Minister for the AustralAsia Railway

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## **MARTIN TO SEND OFF INAUGURAL TRAIN TO DARWIN**

The first train to Darwin on the new AustralAsia Railway will be carrying more than just freight, Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said today.

Flying out today to attend the official send off, Ms Martin said that it will carry the hopes, dreams and best wishes of thousands of excited Territorians.

“After more than a 100 years of talking, planning and working, the first freight train on the AustralAsia Railway will leave Adelaide tomorrow lunchtime, bound for Darwin,” she said.

“As preparation work for the train’s arrival ramps up in the Territory’s major centres the countdown to the inaugural journey is now down to a matter of hours.

“This is the start of a new national transport link connecting the NT to Australia’s southern markets with the Port of Darwin and the lucrative Asian markets to our north.

“This railway will create jobs, business opportunities and place an international focus on the NT - the dream of an intercontinental railway is about to become a reality.”

Ms Martin said that the railway’s enormous economic potential has been highlighted by FreightLink - the railway’s owner/operator for the next 50 years - securing business with freight forwarding giants TOLL Holdings Ltd, Scotts Group and other freight forwarders.

“FreightLink are well on the way to meeting their first year target of 350,000 tonnes of freight; TOLL is completing a \$7.5 million warehouse at the Government’s new \$9 million business-park and Scotts are planning to expand their Darwin base and increase their work fleet.”

The sleeper in the railway has been tourism with thousands of passengers confirmed to travel on the Ghan this year. The Ghan leaves Adelaide on 1 February arriving in Darwin on 3 February.

“With well over \$10 million in ticket sales already, the Ghan will provide a tremendous tourism boost to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin,” Ms Martin said.

Throughout the week preparation work for the arrival of the train has continued across the Territory.

“The train finishes its inaugural journey at the Port of Darwin on Saturday at 1:30pm and thousands of Territorians are expected to be there to witness this historic moment,” she said.

“In Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, and Katherine first train events are also being prepared and I urge Territorians to take part.”