



CELEBRATING THE PAST

Building
the
Future

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

17th January 2004

CLARE MARTIN MLA

Chief Minister

Minister for the AustralAsia Railway

FIRST FREIGHT TRAIN ARRIVES IN DARWIN

A day many people thought would never arrive is here with the first freight train on the new AustralAsia Railway pulling into the Port of Darwin this afternoon.

Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said that Territorians had wanted, and worked towards, a railway for more than a hundred years.

“There are so many dedicated people that deserve credit for making this day possible,” she said.

“To these people, and on behalf of the Territory Government, thank you - you can hold your head high knowing that you helped make this Territory dream a reality.”

Ms Martin said that the railway has the potential to transform the Northern Territory economically and socially by linking us to Southern Australia and, through the Port of Darwin, Asia.

“Today’s arrival in Darwin marks the end of the first leg of this historic journey and the beginning of a new transport chain for freight and passengers.

“From here, the challenge is ensure that this railway is as productive as possible and that it delivers on the huge business and job creation potential.”

Before arriving at today’s Darwin celebration the first freight train stopped in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine where it was warmly welcomed by thousands of proud Territorians.

“Territorians have embraced this train and the excitement with which it was greeted at each stop highlighted how much this means to us all,” Ms Martin said.

“This level of excitement has only built with the news that FreightLink - the owner/operator of the line for the next 50 years - has signed a number of major customers including Scotts Group.

“FreightLink is now well on the way to meeting its annual target of 350,000 tonnes of freight, and increasing to 800,000 tonnes per year, with these important customers set to play a major role.”

Ms Martin said that the train would begin its return trip tomorrow morning.

The first Ghan passenger train leaves Adelaide on 1 February arriving in Darwin on 3 February.