

Updated 8 July 2003

## SLEEPER FACTORY

The Tennant Creek Sleeper Factory operated by Austrak is Australia's largest sleeper manufacturing plant. It employs 60 people at the plant and associated activities. More than 1.1 million sleepers will roll out of the Tennant Creek Factory before railway construction is complete, with more than 975,000 produced to date. Sleeper production is expected to be complete in September 03. Passenger and freight terminals will be located close to the existing sleeper factory.

## RAIL WELDING & TRACKLAYING

Rail is loaded on to trains at OneSteel's Whyalla plant in South Australia for the trip to Roe Creek, about 20km south of Alice Springs. From there, it is loaded on to specially designed road trains operated by Katherine-based Sling Shot Haulage for the road trip north to both Tennant Creek and Katherine. Once in Tennant Creek, the 27.5 metre lengths are welded into 357.5m lengths and stockpiled ready for tracklaying. The Flash Butt welding process involves fusing the ends of the rail together by heating electrically to over 1,500 degrees centigrade.

Once in track, each of these lengths is then welded together using the aluminothermic process. When complete there will essentially be a continuous rail from Alice Springs through to Darwin. Tracklaying initially headed north of Tennant Creek and met up with the rail coming south from Katherine on 13 December 2002. Tracklaying by the southern crew has now been laid 323 km north and 319 km south of Tennant Creek. Tracklaying south towards Alice Springs recommenced in January 2003 with 156 km still to be laid to reach Alice Springs.

## BALLAST REQUIREMENTS

About 1.55 million tonnes of rock was crushed at the Tennant Creek quarry to supply ballast for the railway. Production of ballast was completed in March 2003. More than 50 ballast wagons were delivered to Tennant Creek to carry the rock out along the line for each day of tracklaying. During each shift, more than 3000 tonnes of ballast are needed.

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FreightLink will operate the AustralAsia Railway and has undertaken considerable work on structuring its service to help facilitate and promote regional development, international trade and tourism. A number of opportunities have been identified particularly large mineral projects that are set to generate economic development in and around the central railway corridor. The existence of the line will be a key factor in unlocking the development potential of the Northern Territory's largely untapped mineral reserves and FreightLink expects that a number of mining developments along the central corridor will be viable as a result.

## OPERATION OF THE RAILWAY

Once the railway is complete, Tennant Creek can expect to see one freight train per day in each direction through the town. In addition to the FreightLink service, The Ghan will extend its services to Darwin, with a significant boost to tourism expected. The Ghan has seen a significant increase in passenger numbers since being taken over by private operators; Great Southern Railways and travel packages will offer side trips in regional centres.

For Further Information contact the AustralAsia Railway Corporation Telephone 89469595 [www.aarc.com.au](http://www.aarc.com.au)