



Media Release

Thursday 25 September 2003

ADELAIDE TO DARWIN RAIL LINE REACHES PORT OF DARWIN

The final link in Australia's land bridge to Asia was completed this morning when the 3,000km Adelaide to Darwin rail line reached the Port of Darwin.

The final pandrol clip was placed on the line at a special ceremony at the port, which will serve as a gateway to burgeoning Asian trade markets.

Bruce McGowan, CEO of FreightLink, which owns and operates the line, said a visionary infrastructure project of strategic national importance was now complete.

"With the clip securely in place, southern Australia is now linked by rail to Darwin's new East Arm Wharf, the only natural deep water port on Australia's northern coast, and a gateway for trade with Asia," Mr McGowan said.

"Darwin's proximity to the burgeoning Asian markets to our immediate north provides an exciting opportunity for an alternative trade route.

"The Northern Territory capital is the obvious centre for trade between the busy markets of Australia's south east and ports in Asia.

"Singapore, our 7th largest bilateral trading partner, is about four days away by sea; Hong Kong and Port Klang are five."

As FreightLink heads toward the start of operations in January, the company is building alliances with Intra-Asian shipping lines and large international freight forwarders with extensive networks in the region.

Mr McGowan said that by integrating FreightLink's services – rail and terminal operations – with shipping services at the Port, new supply chain solutions for a range of international and domestic customers would be created.

"With transit time between Adelaide and Darwin to be slashed to 43 hours, time-sensitive and high-value consignments will move faster, more reliably, in better condition and for less cost than road or sea."

But the rail line was not only about freight, as today's unveiling of the new Ghan passenger locomotive in Sydney attested, Mr McGowan said.

"FreightLink's Adelaide-to-Darwin rail line will also open up Australia's red heart to tourists from around the country and across the globe," Mr McGowan said.

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