



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

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CLARE MARTIN MLA **Chief Minister**

FIRST RAIL ARRIVES IN ALICE SPRINGS

Chief Minister Clare Martin today witnessed the historic first delivery of steel rail for the Alice to Darwin Railway.

Freight operator Australian Southern Railroad, this morning off-loaded 2,000 tonnes of rail at Roe Creek (20 km south of Alice Springs), after hauling it from OneSteel's Whyalla plant.

"This is a significant milestone for the \$1.3 billion project, and for the Territory," Ms Martin said.

Today's rail was delivered by two locomotives - named Darwin, and Alice - and loaded onto specially designed road trains, for transfer to Tennant Creek and Katherine construction depots.

On arrival, the 27.5 metre lengths of steel will be stockpiled, and eventually welded into 300 metre structures in preparation for track laying.

The Chief Minister said the enormity of the rail transport task for the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway reflects the size of this great infrastructure project.

"Over the next two years 145,000 tonnes of rail will be brought from OneSteel to Alice Springs," she said.

"As of October 1st, 247 kilometres of rail corridor land had been cleared and 187 kilometres of embankment built-up."

Equally as impressive are the benefits that will flow through the Territory during construction and future operation.

“More than 1500 contracts, worth almost \$300 million, have now been awarded to Territory companies and - at last count - at least five hundred people now have jobs on the railway,” Ms Martin said.

The Central Land Council in Alice Springs and Julalikari Council in Tennant Creek have played a significant role here, with many indigenous Territorians gaining employment on the railway and in construction camps.”

As part of a leasing arrangement between Asia Pacific Transport and the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association, Roe Creek will continue as the rail shipment depot.

Contracted Katherine road transport company Slingshot Haulage, will base its operations and drivers in Alice Springs during the construction phase.

Ms Martin said Alice Springs will serve as a major logistics base for the project, providing supplies and staff to ADrail and other railway contractors.

“Just as the original railway opened up the Centre of Australia when it arrived in 1929, its completion 75 years later will provide many opportunities for the Territory,” she said.

“Tourist numbers on the Ghan are expected to double, new business markets will open in Asia, while reduced freight costs will assist local companies and create opportunities in the mining and agriculture sectors.”

The first track will be laid in April next year with the entire project due for completion early 2004.