
ALICE SPRINGS Thursday 18 September 2003

ALICE TO DARWIN IS A VITAL LINK IN SA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

Premier Mike Rann says the welding ceremony in the centre of Australia that will finally link Adelaide to Darwin to create one of the longest railways in the world, will bookmark in history a new era in economic growth for South Australia.

“This railway, stretching 3000 kilometres from coast to coast, is about to become a vital cog in South Australia’s economic future.

“The Adelaide to Darwin railway provides an important new export corridor to Asia.

“The Economic Development Board and Growth Summit have challenged South Australia to triple the value of our exports to \$25 billion by 2013.

“Getting the right infrastructure in place, such as this railway and the new \$240 million Adelaide Airport terminal, will give South Australian industries the tools they need to expand, grow and seek out new export opportunities.

“It is encouraging that during the construction phase, this \$1.3 billion rail project has already exceeded all of our expectations in terms of economic spin offs.

“When the final rails are laid in Darwin next week, it will have been completed ahead of schedule, and surpassed all expectations in term of value of contracts won locally.

“To date, South Australian companies have won contracts, subcontracts and supplied goods and services to this project worth more than \$440 million.

“South Australian and Northern Territory companies won more than 90 per cent of the contracts even though the initial target for locally-based contracts was set at 75 per cent.

“While 147 South Australians were employed on the construction project, more than 300 additional jobs were generated by the SA contracts won in by SA industry.

“SA companies such as Intercast & Forge, OneSteel in Whyalla, EDI Rail in Port Augusta, Krueger Engineering in Mt Gambier, Allied Engineering and Leed Engineering and Construction were our biggest contractors on this project. OneSteel, for instance, manufactured 144 000 tonnes of steel rail for the project.

“I am now looking forward to joining Prime Minister John Howard and NT Chief Minister Clare Martin on the very first freight train into Darwin in mid-January next year.

“It is already well known that Australia’s trade with Asia is increasing, especially with China which is predicted to become Australia’s largest trading partner by the end of this decade.

“The opportunities for South Australian industries, especially in our food and wine industries, are huge.

“I am told that FreightLink, the operator of the new rail freight service, is already planning for 350 000 tonnes of freight that currently goes to Darwin by road, to be sent by rail.

“FreightLink believes there is the potential to increase that load from SA to Darwin to more than 800 000 tonnes during the first few years of the rail line’s operations.

“Moving freight by rail has advantages in there will be fewer road transports on our highways which will contribute to lower maintenance costs and reduce the risk of road crashes.

“I am also looking forward to taking the very first Ghan passenger trip from Adelaide to Darwin on February 1.

“I have been told that ticket sales have already outstripped predictions, with more than \$5 million tickets sold to date.

“It is a great pleasure for me to return to Alice Springs today, two years and two months after gathering here to witness the turning of the first sod that signalled the start of this project.

“Today’s ceremony and the historic ceremony in Darwin next week marks the culmination of a promise made to South Australia by the Commonwealth nearly 100 years ago.

“We have waited a long time for this railway, and I congratulate all of those who have been involved in its construction for their outstanding work in bringing this massive project to its conclusion,” Mr Rann said.

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