



# NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

13<sup>th</sup> December, 2002

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## **CLARE MARTIN MLA** Chief Minister Minister for AustralAsia Railway

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### **ALICE SPRINGS TO DARWIN TRACK-JOINING CEREMONY**

Chief Minister Clare Martin this morning witnessed the historic thermit weld providing a continual rail link between Katherine and Tennant Creek.

“This is an important milestone in the \$1.3 billion Alice to Darwin Railway with the joining of a rail line running north of Tennant Creek and south of Katherine,” Ms Martin said.

The final thermit weld, linking the two sections of the line, was ignited at the ADrail Buchanan Camp, 67km west of Dunmarra along the Buchanan Highway.

The link was witnessed by 50 guests - including Senator Nigel Scullion and the Hon Jane Lomax-Smith, SA Minister for Tourism and Small Business - and 72 ADrail workers in a brief but significant ceremony that signifies the completion of over 50% of construction on the AustralAsia Railway Project.

Track-laying began in April 2002, and since then the two track work teams have been working 13 of every 14 days to get 645km of track completed before the wet season takes hold.

The two teams, one based in Tennant Creek and the other in Katherine, have completed 2km per team per day to reach this milestone.

“It takes a special kind of person to work in the outback – the type that have shaped this nation in the past,” Ms Martin said.

“Most Australians can only imagine the sort of conditions these men and women have been working under to get this very important job done, creating history by building a new trade route from southern Australia to the far north.

“Their efforts will open an alternate trade route through Australia and into Asia and beyond.”

Ms Martin said that, along with those working on the line each day, there are others that share the Territory’s vision: the South Australia Government, the Federal Government and Asia Pacific Transport (the consortium that will own and operate the railway for the first 50 years).

“All of the parties involved in the funding, construction and administration of the railway share the same dream that began over 100 years ago,” she said.

“The final thermit weld on this section of the railway might be seen as just one of 3500 thermit welds already performed, but it is far more important than that.

“It has created a link between two major Territory towns and provides an even greater construction efficiency on the remaining line from Tennant Creek to Alice Springs and from Katherine to Darwin.

“For the first time, construction goods can be produced in Katherine and transported in a cost effective, timely manner to the construction front south of Tennant Creek.

“I congratulate those who have been a part of this great project and I look forward to the day when we welcome the first freight train into Darwin.

“This final thermit weld ceremony signifies to all Australians that that moment is getting closer by the day.”