
PORT OF DARWIN Thursday September 25, 2003

WE BUILT IT – NOW IT’S UP TO INDUSTRY TO JUMP ON BOARD

Premier Mike Rann said he expected exporters and other industries to seize on the big opportunities offered by the Adelaide to Darwin railway and to use it as much as possible.

Attending the historic ceremony to mark the completion of the tracklaying on the new rail project at the Port of Darwin today, Mr Rann said it was up to industry to realise the huge potential offered by the railway and take up the challenge to get on board.

“The private sector expects Governments to do their bit to help them grow and prosper.

“The SA, NT and Federal Government have ensured that this new export corridor that joins the south coast of our continent to the north coast, was built.

“No-one has ever claimed the Adelaide to Darwin rail would be an instant over-night hit. It’s an act of nation building for the future. But we believe that when the rail line does open, the benefits should become obvious from the time that the first freight train rolls out of Adelaide on January 15 next year.

“This important piece of infrastructure has been built to help our exporters, to help the tourism industry, to help the flow of freight across the country.

“For decades the business community has wanted governments to commit to building this rail line. It’s now up to the private sector to make it a success.

“Rail as a means of transport is undergoing a resurgence across the world. For instance, rail freight commands more than 12 per cent of the UK surface freight market and is a growing industry with over 3 per cent annual growth, and 50 per cent growth since 1994.

“It is a mode of transport that is safe, reliable, fuel-efficient, environmentally-friendly, it helps ease maintenance costs on our highways associated with the enormous volume of heavy truck movements, and it lessens the risk and cost of traffic congestion and traffic accidents.

“The South Australian Government will hold a major industry briefing on November 14 in Adelaide to outline the future opportunities offered by the railway.

“The briefing aims to answer any and all questions the private sector has in relation to using rail as opposed to other forms of transport north.

“The new operators of the freight train service, FreightLink, will be detailing its business plan and objectives, including its proposed rail services and vision for the future.

“In the meantime, I congratulate the Asia Pacific Transport Consortium and their construction contractors Adrail that have built this railway months ahead of schedule and on budget.

“It is a credit to all those involved and I very much look forward to accompanying Prime Minister John Howard and NT Chief Minister Clare Martin on the first freight train and later, the first Ghan when it leaves Adelaide for Darwin on February 1 next year,” Mr Rann said.

Premier Rann is in Darwin for the final track laying ceremony at 7 o'clock this morning.

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