



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

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KON VATSKALIS MLA Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment

SLEEPERS AND STAFF ROLL OUT AT KATHERINE FACTORY

The Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment Kon Vatskalis today witnessed the first of two million concrete sleepers to come off the production line in Katherine - a major milestone for the Alice to Darwin Railway.

Mr Vatskalis, representing the Chief Minister Clare Martin, also met the first four local employees, including three Indigenous staff, who commenced work at the Katherine sleeper factory this week.

“This is a great day for Katherine and a great day for the Territory,” he said.

“The \$8 million sleeper factories in Tennant Creek and Katherine have already generated subcontracts for the local supply of: cement (from Northern Cement); power, water and other services; structural steel erection; concreting; and, transport.

“The local benefits will continue, with the eventual employment of 40 people in Katherine and 60 in Tennant Creek during the operational stage of the factories.”

Mr Vatskalis said 400 people were now directly employed on the railway and 1500 contracts worth about \$300 million had been let to Territory businesses by ADrail.

“For every major contract awarded, a significant number of sub-contracts are let and that creates a multiplier effect for jobs and expenditure and a major boost for the regions,” he said.

“Territorians are securing jobs that will provide long-term skills and communities are enjoying increased expenditure as a result.”

Austrak Project Director John Ready said the Katherine factory had been completed on time and the commissioning process was now starting.

Mr Ready has overseen the installation of stressing equipment, concrete moulds, concrete placing equipment, steam generators to cure the sleepers and diamond saws.

The concrete sleepers are made in six long beds, cut by the diamond saws, then stockpiled by gantries until track-laying starts next April.

Last week, Austrak began 'dry trials' to test the equipment, which is being followed this week by the first 'wet' trials with real materials.

Austrak has brought nine staff from its existing sleeper factories to help train local employees.

Mr Ready said there would be a strong emphasis on the employment of local Indigenous Territorians.

"The factory's production manager, Ron McDowell, from Austrak's Townsville sleeper factory, has extensive experience working with Aboriginal communities in Queensland," he said.

Peak production is expected to be achieved in February, with 1600 sleepers a day produced at the Katherine factory and 2200 a day in Tennant Creek.

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