THE GHAN HELPS BUILD TERRITORY TOURISM IN FIRST YEAR

Marking the first anniversary of The Ghan’s maiden journey from Adelaide, through the Territory, and onto Darwin, Chief Minister, Clare Martin, today said the first year of operation had provided a significant boost to Territory tourism.

“The Ghan has been an outstanding success and created a new way for tourists and locals to experience the Territory year-round,” she said.

“Bookings for the first year surpassed all expectations as train enthusiasts from across the world have travelled aboard the legendary Ghan - it has helped drive economic growth and create new jobs for Territorians.”

Ms Martin congratulated the train’s operator Great Southern Railway (GSR) for its success in marketing the journey on a local, national and international stage.

“Over 70,000 people have travelled aboard The Ghan in its first year and provided a significant boost to Territory tourism businesses and helped keep the Territory moving ahead,” she said.

“The impact on businesses ranging from accommodation and tours to restaurants and retail has been significant and - according to NT Tourist Commission predictions - has seen approximately 28 million injected into the Territory economy.

“Bookings for 2005 are also strong and with GSR doubling its Adelaide - Darwin service to twice weekly for May, June and July - an additional 13 trains - this year looks set to be another major success.”

Ms Martin said that the additional weekly service would take the number of passenger trains between Adelaide - Alice Springs to three and that GSR is confident they will be a success.

“We have taken a number of measures to improve the service over the past year and something that worked particularly well was a NTTC/GSR initiative to make 200 on-board staff take destination training programs to learn more about what the Territory has too offer,” she said.

“The number of tour options available to passengers has also been increased so that the benefits of The Ghan are enjoyed more widely through the local business community.”

Ms Martin said that the NT Government has allocated an additional $27.5 million to the tourism budget over 3-years and spent over $7 million building and upgrading passenger terminals in our major centres.