A potential new rail project linking Tennant Creek to Mount Isa has taken another step forward with the Northern Territory Government awarding a tender for a scoping study on the project to Port Jackson Partners.

Chief Minister Adam Giles said the scoping study would investigate the opportunities and benefits a Mount Isa to Tennant Creek railway could provide and how to give the project the best chance of success.

“The 600 kilometre railway between Mount Isa and Tennant Creek could provide enormous economic opportunities, potentially opening up new mining projects and boosting development in our regional and remote areas,” he said.

“Preliminary investigations suggest a number of mining companies in the Mount Isa area could be interested in exporting through the Port of Darwin, instead of Townsville.

“We don’t need a feasibility study to tell us that we should open opportunities to develop the significant resources we know exist in this region.

“This piece of enabling infrastructure would join to, and benefit from the existing railways between Adelaide and Darwin and from Mount Isa to Townsville, providing an efficient route to market for potential new projects in the region and a new logistics option for those who currently use both these lines.

“It is quicker and cheaper to export from Western Queensland through Darwin because it saves days in shipping time.”

Mr Giles said Port Jackson Partners would deliver an initial report to Government in November with the scoping study to consider the economic and business case for the project, where trade might come from, ownership of the railway and the impact on new and existing freight users.

“The NT and Queensland Governments are also undertaking related studies to the technical feasibility of the project based on engineering, environmental and heritage considerations,” he said.

“Inadequate economic infrastructure is a significant barrier to the development of Northern Australia so it is vital that a project like this is given every consideration.
“That’s why my Government has released an Economic Development Strategy setting out a roadmap for delivering a prosperous economic future for the Northern Territory.

“It is why my Government has initiated key projects such as the gas pipeline connecting the Northern Territory to the eastern gas markets, the lease of the Port of Darwin, a high end hotel development and the Marine Industry Park.

“The Country Liberals’ Government is determined to unlock the full potential of the Northern Territory and create opportunities to deliver more jobs, better services and improve our unique way of life.”

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