Alice Springs residents are invited to join the celebrations when the first freight train to Darwin departs next week.

Acting Chief Minister Syd Stirling said a host of free activities would be held to farewell the first train north when it leaves Alice Springs on Friday, January 16.

"The community celebrations in Alice will pay tribute to the pioneers of the early transport industry in Central Australia, trace the development of the north-south rail link and look to opportunities in the future with the rail going through to Darwin," Mr Stirling said.

"The AustralAsia Railway will open many avenues for businesses and industries in the Centre, with access to key markets and transport options.

"And of course with the first passenger train going through to Darwin next month and the millions of dollars in tickets already booked for the Ghan, tourism will get a boost.

"The railway from the south was a trigger for Alice Springs development back in 1929 and now the way north is open by rail the town can again expect to benefit."

The community celebrations in Alice will take place at the Alice Springs Passenger Terminal next Friday, with the gates opening at 1pm.

There will be mementoes of the big day, displays and entertainment for the kids with the train scheduled to depart at 1.50pm.

"It will be an historic day and I urge Alice Springs residents to join in the celebrations," Mr Stirling said.