Transport and Infrastructure Minister Dr Chris Burns said the arrival in Darwin of the Swires Shipping vessel *NT Express* marks 12 months since the establishment of the AustralAsia Trade Route.

“The *NT Express* provides the regular service between Darwin and Singapore,” Dr Burns said.

“I am delighted that Swires has recently committed the vessel to a further 12 months of operation to continue the development of the AustralAsia Trade Route.”

In September, FreightLink indicated that more than 10,000 tonnes of international export freight had been carried on the AustralAsia Railway since the commencement of operations.

Swires Shipping has carried the majority of this international freight.

The *NT Express* complements the other Swire service that calls at Darwin – the New Guinea Pacific Line (NGPL), which deploys four 24,000 tonne multi-purpose vessels on a 14-day frequency calling at Darwin en-route to Jakarta, Port Klang and Singapore.

“The Government is determined to keep the Territory moving ahead through its promotion of the new AustralAsia Trade Route,” Dr Burns said.

“Only last week, Chief Minister Clare Martin announced that a new Shanghai to Darwin direct shipping service will begin trial operations this month.”

Hai Win Shipping’s inaugural service is expected to leave Shanghai on 11 November and arrive in Darwin on 21 November. It will carry a range of commodities including agricultural chemicals, industrial valves and retail merchandise.

Dr Burns said Darwin’s geographical proximity to major trading nations in Asia is a natural advantage.

“We will continue to promote the Port of Darwin as Australia’s gateway port to Asia,” he said.

The *NT Express* is expected to be in port for about 24 hours, arriving at 2300hrs on 7 November, departing Monday night.