The Ghan has proven to be an overwhelming success since it began operations on 1 February this year Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said today.

“Along with the additional cruise ships in 2004, The Ghan has effectively extended the tourist season bringing approximately 30,000 customers through the Territory to date,” she said.

“That’s 16,000 tourists that the NT Tourist Commission has calculated would not have otherwise visited, resulting in some $27 million into the economy, supporting 200 odd extra tourism jobs.”

The NT Government has acted to maximise these benefits to the Territory and have overseen a number of improvements including an upgrade to the Tennant Creek Railway Station.

“I am pleased to announce that a $165,000 contract has just been awarded as part of my Government’s commitment to upgrade the Tennant Creek Railway Station,” she said.

“Tennant Creek firm, L & R Builders, has won the contract to supply a 45-metre platform, shade structure and off-site fabricating that will make a significant improvement to the facility.”

Ms Martin said that construction will commence next week and that a portable set of stairs had also been delivered to the station.

“My Government has worked closely with Great Southern Railway (GSR) to improve onboard information about the Territory and to better familiarise staff about the NT,” she said.

“Importantly, The Ghan has strong forward bookings through to the end of the year and tickets for April 2005 and beyond are now on sale with GSR recording strong interest.”

“The next big challenge is to work with the local tourism sector to maximise opportunities to incorporate the outback experience for tourists travelling through the Barkly.”