The long-awaited Alice Springs to Darwin leg of the AustralAsia railway has been completed with the event celebrated at a special ceremony at the Port of Darwin.

Chief Minister, Clare Martin, joined Darwin’s first Lord Mayor, Dr Ella Stack, in attaching the final pandrol clip into position this morning, completing the 1420km track.

Ms Martin said that the clip was specially taken from the Adelaide to Alice Springs line and presented to Ms Stack in 1979 in the hope that one day the line would reach Darwin.

"Construction of the railway has now been completed with the attachment of this final clip - the Northern Territory at last has its railway," Ms Martin said.

"This historic project will change the way the Territory does business, opening up many new trade and other business opportunities and creating new jobs.

"Southern Australia will finally be linked by rail to a deep-water seaport in Australia’s north, creating a new gateway for trade with Asia and with that comes significant opportunity."

Ms Martin said that the event was broadcast Australia wide on national television and radio.

"I would like to personally congratulate Asia Pacific Transport Consortium - and their construction contractors ADrail - on the magnificent job of completing this massive nation building project months ahead of schedule," she said.

"After laying 2.9 million tonnes of ballast, 2 million sleepers, 8 million sleeper fastenings and over 140,000 tonnes of rail, the line is now complete and ready for use.

"The construction phase provided an economic boost throughout the Territory - particularly in Katherine and Tennant Creek - and the focus now moves to maximising opportunities from the operations phase with the first freight train due in January and the first passenger train in February."

"Territorians are very proud of this railway and I would like to thank all those - particularly our hard working public servants - who have contributed so much time and effort making it become a reality."

South Premier Mike Rann, Senator Nigel Scullion, and FreightLink CEO Bruce McGowan also attended the ceremony.