Tourism Minister Dr Chris Burns today welcomed the Super Star Virgo cruise ship back to the Port of Darwin, and flagged a visit by her sister ship Super Star Leo later this month.

Virgo is part of the Star Cruises line, the third largest cruise line in the world and the largest in the Asia Pacific region.

The Super Star Virgo last visited Darwin on the 13th of June and arrived back in Darwin today on the return leg of that journey. The Super Star Leo, another liner owned by the Star Cruises line, will also visit Darwin later this year, on July 26th, on its way back to Singapore.

Both the Super Star Virgo and Leo were re-positioned out of Asia earlier this year, due to the downturn of tourism in the region from the SARS outbreak.

"While the SARS outbreak has dampened the tourism industry in general, it has also provided some opportunities for the Territory to expand into new areas, such as an increased focus on maritime arrivals", said Dr Burns.

"The visits of these two Super Star liners are a welcome and important win for Darwin."

"The average cruise passenger spend hundreds of dollars per day on shore excursions and touring. This visit by Super Star Virgo will provide a major financial benefit to Territorians and is expected to inject around $1 million into the local economy."

"The Super Star Virgo is based out of Fremantle and Super Star Leo is based out of Sydney. In line with meetings held with Star cruises in Singapore, the Martin Government is continuing to work hard to promote Darwin as a regular call or turnaround point for Star Cruises", Dr Burns added.

The Super Star Virgo is the biggest cruise ship to visit Darwin, however the QEII was the longest ship. An even bigger ship, the Star Princess owned by P&O Cruises, has a visit planned in 2004.

Super Star Virgo statistics: 268 metre long
75,000 gross tonnage
Speed 25.5 knots
Capacity of 2,800 pax and 1,125 crew