Rail to transform NT: Burke

The Territory “will be transformed” during the anticipated three-year construction phase of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, Chief Minister Denis Burke said yesterday.

The most visible change will be the construction of depots on the outskirts of Tennant Creek and Katherine, which will provide a base for up to 500-member work crews.

The two depots will also be the site of new welding plants, railhead construction headquarters and quarries for ballast.

Smaller, temporary work camps will also be built about every 100km along the railway route, as required.

Each camp will have about 150 workers on site.

Barclay Mowlem managing director David Hudson said construction work on most railways begins at either end and moves in the middle. However he said the sheer size of the 1420km railway means work will be carried out from two sites, with crews heading north and south of Tennant Creek and Katherine. The AsiaPacific Transport Consortium has already provided an initial list of $250 million worth of goods and contracts by NT and SA suppliers for major supply items during the first three months of construction.

The consortium has pledged to source 75 per cent of the value of the project from the Territory and SA. Railway construction is expected to add $600 million to Australia’s GDP during construction and $4.5 billion over the next 25 years.

Australia’s employment is expected to increase by more than 7000 during construction, with 1300 of those involved specifically in the construction.

In the first three months, up to 100 Territorians will have been employed and 45 AdRail staff — who will oversee construction — will move to the NT.

Consortium bid director Franco Moretti earthworks on the project would begin within two weeks.

— CAMDEN SMITH