The dreams of 100 years were fulfilled for Territorians and South Australians on 17 January, when the first freight train arrived at Darwin Harbour from Adelaide.

Community celebrations were held at Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine before thousands gathered at East Arm Wharf, at the Port of Darwin, for the official proceedings led by Prime Minister, John Howard.

Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said that Territorians had wanted, and worked towards, a railway for more than a hundred years.

“There are so many dedicated people who deserve credit for making this day possible,” she said.

“To these people, and on behalf of the Territory Government, thank you – you can hold your heads high knowing that you helped make this Territory dream a reality.”

Ms Martin said that the railway has the potential to transform the Northern Territory economically and socially by linking it to Southern Australia and, through the Port of Darwin, with Asia.

“Today’s arrival in Darwin marks the end of the first leg of this historic journey and the beginning of a new transport chain for freight and passengers.

“From here, the challenge is to ensure that this railway is as productive as possible and that it delivers on the huge business and job creation potential,” the Chief Minister said.

The first Ghan passenger train leaves Adelaide on Sunday 1 February, arriving in Darwin on 3 February.
The inaugural journey of a freight train on the new AustralAsia Railway marks the debut of the country’s newest freight rail operator, FreightLink.

The freight train was the first of an initial five services a week. FreightLink CEO Bruce McGowan said the celebration was the culmination of hard work by a number of people, including all the Asia Pacific Transport/FreightLink consortium partners – Halliburton KBR, Barclay Mowlem, Australian Railroad Group, John Holland Group, Macmahon Holdings, National Asset Management, Colonial First State Investment and the Northern and Central Land Councils. It was also a tribute, he said, to the vision of the Northern Territory, South Australian and Australian Governments and the AustralAsia Railway Corporation.

“The inaugural journey represents the official start of a reliable rail freight service that will deliver the very best to freight forwarders and importers/exporters while generating commercial opportunities never available previously in the NT, SA and nationwide,” Mr McGowan said.

FreightLink services will be the catalyst for flourishing regional industry development, including new agriculture, mining, aquaculture and tourism ventures as well as exciting new export markets to Australia’s north. It will service a region that, according to Access Economics, will lead the country in average annual economic growth over the next four years. It is envisaged that the railway will carry 80 per cent of existing freight volumes between Adelaide and Darwin.

“We are on course to achieve our aim of securing up to 350,000 tonnes of existing domestic freight in the first few years of operation and a further 450,000 tonnes resulting from other general freight, fuel, agricultural, defence, mining and international trade opportunities,” Mr McGowan said.

FreightLink’s confidence was underpinned by the recent signing of a five-year contract with Scott Group’s Northern Territory Freight Services to carry more than 120,000 tonnes of annual freight normally transported by road to Darwin.

Scott Group CEO and Managing Director Allan Scott said the cost-effective service offered by FreightLink was pivotal to the company’s decision to make the transition from road to rail.

“Scott Group’s relationship with FreightLink will enable NTFS’ eastern seaboard customers to access the national rail network for the first time. It will also open up opportunities to expand our business from Sydney and Melbourne,” Mr Scott said.

FreightLink has also entered into agreements with freight forwarders Toll Holdings, Northline and FCL, as well as a number of furniture removalists and car carriers, including Patricks and TNT.
TERRITORY COMPANY BENEFITS FROM NEW TRADE ROUTE

Territory retail clothing company Geminex is set for a major expansion after signing an agreement with Melbourne specialist scan packing company, Supply-LINQ.

Under the agreement – called Supply-LINQ Northern Territory – Geminex will carry out ‘value adding’ packaging work on clothes shipped from Asia and then transported by rail to the southern States. Supply-LINQ provides ‘floor ready’ merchandise services to major retailers such as Coles Myer, Target, Kmart, Big W, David Jones and Just Jeans. Floor ready merchandising covers all aspects of preparing bulk orders of imported clothes for sale, including pricing, placing clothes on hangers, packing for individual stores and bar coding.

Geminex operates a retail franchise called Totally Workwear in Darwin and Adelaide that provides workwear, safety, environmental and mining supplies to major industries, government departments and mining companies. The company was established in 1986 and now employs 20 staff.

The agreement has been praised by Chief Minister Clare Martin as a perfect example of how opportunities will arise for local companies that can now ride on the back of the AustralAsia Railway.

Supply-LINQ Director Bryce Ferguson said Darwin is ideally placed to receive retail merchandise from Asia, process goods and forward them on to the rest of Australia. “The benefits of packaging goods in Darwin include reduced order times and lower freight costs,” he said.

The new service will also receive orders from retailers on behalf of suppliers; receive, unload and ultimately deliver goods from overseas containers; send invoices to retailers and provide a transport management and tracking system.

TRADE AND EXPORT COMMUNITY TURNS OUT FOR AUSTRALASIA TRADE ROUTE

Asian Relations and Trade Minister Paul Henderson has returned from Indonesia after delivering a keynote address to 120 business people, exporters and traders at a seminar in Jakarta dedicated to the AustralAsia Trade Route.

Mr Henderson spent three days in Jakarta on a trade delegation and was joined by Mr Bruce Fadelli, President of the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Mr John Parkes, General Manager of International Marketing for Freightlink.

“The AustralAsia Trade Route is open for business and Darwin is Australia’s Asian Gateway,” Mr Henderson told the seminar.

The seminar was seen as an important opportunity to explain first hand to a large group from the Indonesian business community the opportunities flowing from the AustralAsia Trade Route and Darwin’s place in the new logistics supply chain.

Mr Fadelli gave a first hand account of doing business in and with the Northern Territory. His address carried particular weight, given his extensive experience of trading with Indonesia.

The Director of the Chamber of Commerce for the ASEAN Group of Nations attended the seminar and expressed interest in establishing a working group to identify opportunities to present the new trade route to ASEAN business leaders.

NOTEWORTHY

• Trade between Indonesia and Australia is worth about $7.5 billion a year.
• Indonesia is Australia’s sixth largest trading partner.
• Trade in terms of bulk is petroleum products and machinery but also furniture, garments and clothes.
DARWIN CITY WATERFRONT SHORT-LIST ANNOUNCED

Three consortia have been short-listed after 11 Expressions of Interest were received for the Darwin Waterfront Redevelopment project.

Work is expected to start on the project once negotiations with a successful bidder are finalised at the end of 2004. The $600 million public private sector project will see 25 hectares of prime waterfront land redeveloped, including a world-class Convention and Exhibition Centre. The Northern Territory Government has allocated $100 million towards the project.

 Consortia were assessed in a rigorous process which examined their experience of partnerships with government, track record of working on projects of a similar scale and complexity, commitment to local industry participation and financial and management capacity to work on a long-term project.

The three short-listed bidders are:

- **ABN AMRO** and Australian property developer, the **Walker Corporation**. This consortium would use local construction companies Sitzler Brothers and Barclay Mowlem to design and construct the convention and exhibition centre and other local consultants.

- **Macquarie Bank** and **Leighton Contractors**, with several local consultants used for master-planning, architectural, engineering and accountancy work.

- **Multiplex-led consortium**, including Darwin property developers Redco Investments and Philip and Mitaros Projects, as well as other local consultants.

“All companies have extensive experience in large integrated developments and public-private partnerships and a proven capacity to undertake large long-term projects, as well as including some of the best convention centre and waterfront design expertise from Australia and overseas,” Chief Minister Clare Martin said.

“One of the critical elements of this project is a commitment to local participation, and all three consortia meet this criterion through a mixture of consortium members, consultants or contractors.”

The three bidders will now develop detailed proposals, including master plans, for the 25-hectare site that will include commercial and residential components. Tenders will close in May, with the preferred bidder nominated and contract negotiations to be completed in the second half of 2004. Work is due to start on siteworks in mid 2004 and on the Convention Centre and Waterfront Redevelopment in early 2005.


---

**Freight Conference to Focus on Global Trade**

There will be a significant presence of Asian representatives at the Global Freight Connect 2004 conference to be held in Darwin on 9 and 10 February. The conference will focus on trends and opportunities in global trade, regional outlooks and international supply chains from an industry and customer perspective.

For more information, visit [http://www.freightconnect.nt.gov.au](http://www.freightconnect.nt.gov.au)

**Confirmed Speakers**

- Hon. Clare Martin, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
- Hon. John Anderson, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Transport and Regional Services
- Paul Little, Managing Director, Toll Holdings Ltd
- Chris Richardson, Director, Access Economics
- Lee Hsiien Yang, President and Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Telecommunications Ltd
- William Rothery, Chief Executive and Managing Director, John Swire and Sons Pty Ltd
- Mike Mohan, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Railroad Group
- David Grieve, General Manager, Supply LINQ
- Neil Matthews, Director, Strategic Design and Development
- Ross Ellison, Regional Director-Asia, LinFox Malaysia Sdn Bhd
- Dallas Mills, Executive General Manager, Tenix Defence Systems
- Tim Beattie, Director – International Freight Management, Exel (Australia) Pty Ltd
- Len Daly, Managing Director, Vopak Terminals Australia
- Meryl Stanton, Executive Director, AQIS
- Colin Jensen, President, ITS Australia
- Bruce McGowan, Chief Executive Officer, FreightLink
- Koh Soo Keong, President and Chief Executive Officer, SembCorp Logistics
- Michael Luscombe, General Manager – Supply Chain, Woolworths
- Stephen Cleary, Acting Group General Manager Freight, Qantas Airways Ltd
- Alexander Kachellek, Director Materials – Operations, Holden Limited
- Doug Grimmond, Site Manager, Alcan Gove
- Wei Qing, President, COSCO Oceania Pty Ltd
- San Miguel Corporation (Philippines)
- Hon. Rory McEwen, Minister for Industry, Trade and Regional Development, South Australian Government

---

To provide the developers with a comprehensive list of issues from community and business groups, several workshops were held this month to obtain input into a ‘Community views on the Master Plan’ document.

Seven workshops were well attended by community, business, tourism and government representatives. Although not all views can be incorporated into the final master plan, Government has stressed that it is crucial that the short-listed developers take into account community aspirations.
UPSTREAM PETROLEUM HOSE FLOATS

A 16 inch nominal diameter, 320m-long floating hose constructed by Darwin company Upstream Petroleum has been towed 500 kilometres out into the Timor Sea to be connected to the Liberdade, a floating storage and offtake facility (FSO) moored at the Bayu-Undan gasfield.

Italian-built, the 26 segments of the 70 tonne hose were assembled and pressure tested for leaks at Darwin’s Casuarina beach by Upstream Petroleum, then towed to the gasfield. This is the first time a Territory company has managed and executed a project of this size and nature.

“We submitted our tender for this job to ConocoPhillips just like everyone else. We won the contract on best technical knowledge, best price and of course our locality,” Company director Mark Paton said.

Established in Darwin in 1997 by Mark and fellow director Cam Rathie, the company may have started small but it already has an impressive skill base and wealth of experience. The two met in 1989 when Cam interviewed Mark for a position in Darwin with BHPP. At this time Cam already had 20 years of working his way within the industry and around the world, with experience in the US, Asia, the UK and the Middle East, which was where Mark was working when he made his decision to come to Darwin.

“I was working in Doha when I read an article in a Society engineering journal about the potential of gas in the Timor Sea,” he explained. “I thought this just had to be the next North Sea and I wanted to be part of it. I worked for BHPP based in Darwin for eight years before they wanted to move me to Perth but I wanted to stay and decided the time was right to start the business with Cam. The gamble has finally paid off.”

Upstream Petroleum now has five directors and employs 70 permanent staff and 10-15 contractors. The head office is still in Darwin with a second office in Melbourne servicing three separate gas facilities in the south. So what next?

“This contract (for the hose) has come at a critical time for us and other Darwin companies,” said Mark. “It allows us to show ConocoPhillips what we can do at a time when they are evaluating tenders for the operations, maintenance and service contract of the off-shore Bayu-Undan facilities. Upstream Petroleum, RANms, and Quality Maintenance Services have entered into a joint venture and submitted a tender for this project. If we are successful, we envisage this would create 50 permanent jobs in Darwin. I have been waiting for this to happen since 1989.”


NT COMPANY THE LINK IN TERRITORY GAS

The benefits of Timor Sea gas for Territory small businesses can be seen first hand at the recently completed accommodation camp constructed near Palmerston. Contracted by the Territory office of Fleetwood Portables, NT Link this month handed over the last of the 200 buildings that will accommodate up to 800 workers during the construction of the Wickham Point LNG site.

With operations in Darwin and Alice Springs, NT Link recruited employees in both centres over the six-month contract. “… and the payroll tripled,” said NT Link Operations Manager Rob Mills. NT Link also sub-contracted further local businesses for electrical, plumbing and paving work as well as the design contract for the installation, which was awarded to Darwin company TCM Engineers.

Above: NTLink employees at the accommodation camp for Wickham Point LNG staff.
$1.2 million tender for Desert Knowledge

Chief Minister Clare Martin has announced a $1.2 million tender for the first stage of the Desert Knowledge Australia precinct in Alice Springs. The tender is for the construction of a dual carriageway along the Stuart Highway and for the precinct entry, the Avenue of Knowledge.

The Government has committed more than $20 million over four years to the project. The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment has spent 12 months on planning and consultation to minimise environmental impact. Traditional landowners and native title holders have also been consulted. Construction of Stage 1 of the headworks (roads and power) is expected to start by February 2004.

First-ever SilkAir charter

A German travel company has commissioned two Singapore to Darwin flights with Singapore Airlines subsidiary SilkAir. The Airbus 319 and 320 aircraft will bring 265 German tourists via Singapore to Darwin on February 23 and 26. Former Tourism Minister Dr Chris Burns met with SilkAir management three times last year, and travelled to Singapore in November to progress the business case for additional services. The NT Tourism Commission estimates that the two SilkAir charters will contribute more than $200,000 in direct visitor expenditure within the NT. SilkAir will be looking at opportunities for further charter services into the NT.

Minister Burns’ visit to Singapore coincided with the decision to base a new Territory tourism marketing representative in Singapore. Dr Burns said it was important to engage Asia as part of the Territory’s efforts to market business opportunities because of the potential growth from nearby Asian markets.

Upgrade to Alice Springs Station

Chief Minister Clare Martin has announced a $300,000 upgrade of the visitor arrival area at the Alice Springs railway station. Local company Probuild NT was awarded the $198,000 tender to construct shade structures along the platform. The upgrade will also include a visitor walkway, landscaping, visitor seating and new information signs. The upgrade will bring the Alice Springs station into line with the visitor arrival area at the Alice Springs railway station. The upgrade will provide a reception area for visitors. The upgrade is a partnership with Government, Great Southern Railway and the Alice Springs Town Council.

Police station upgrades underway

Contracts to the value of $1.2 million are being awarded to upgrade Territory police stations. Alice Springs-based company B & G Regional Construction has won the contract for cell upgrades at Oenpelli, worth $168,000, and Milingrida, worth $172,000. Further contracts will include an estimated $250,000 upgrade of the Ali Curung Police Station, more than $200,000 worth of upgrades to cells at Adelaide River and $200,000 for cell upgrades at Santa Teresa.

Darwin’s strategy for cruise ship market

Darwin is expecting more than 15,000 visitors to disembark from 13 cruise ships at Stokes Hill Wharf in the first four months of this year, an increase of 160 per cent on last year’s figures.

Research shows the most popular activity undertaken by cruise passengers was shopping (68%) and sightseeing in Darwin CBD (45%). The most popular tour taken was the Darwin City tour, but seeing crocodiles was also an important factor when considering what to do in the limited time passengers had ashore. A passenger spends an average of $184 while in Darwin. The NT Tourist Commission is working with the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) to complete a Cruise Strategy. Cruise sellers are now offering packages that include travel on The Ghan from Darwin and take in the Red Centre sights.

Navy Patrol Boats big business

Defence Maritime Services (DMS)/Austal consortium has been named as the preferred tender to build and support the Navy’s new fleet of 12 Armadale Patrol Boats. Eight of the new patrol boats will be based in Darwin from 2005. The Armadale Patrol Boats have a lifespan of 15 years, which provides maintenance opportunities for Territory firms. DMS expect to have about 40 extra jobs in its Darwin offices at the peak of the project.

Flights a boost to tourism

Tourism Minister Dr Chris Burns has welcomed Virgin Blue’s decision to offer direct flights from Melbourne to Darwin. The new service, which starts on 7 April, will be offered three times a week and boosts existing Virgin Blue services in the Territory. The Virgin Blue expansion was announced on the same day as the decision by Australian Airlines to conduct new services from Singapore. The fights will operate on Boeing 767-300 aircraft, providing an extra 540 seats into Darwin each week. Combined with the QANTAS flights, this means there will now be services between Singapore and Darwin on five out of seven days each week. The NT Tourism Commission estimates these flights have the potential to attract up to 28,000 extra tourists per year.

Plan to attract skilled migrants

Business and Industry Minister Paul Henderson has released a draft plan to help Territory businesses attract skilled migrants to live and work in the Northern Territory. Copies of the plan are being distributed amongst community and industry groups, and community consultations will be held across the Territory. The discussion paper gives industry and business an opportunity to consider the draft plan and be involved in developing the final strategy. Submissions close in early March, and the final strategy is due for completion in April.

For more information on any of these items, go to www.nt.gov.au/ocm/media_releases/
IN BRIEF - continued

Trend shows jobs up, unemployment down

January’s ABS figures have provided further positive news for the Territory’s labour market with trend employment increasing for the fourth consecutive month.

Trend employment figures for December increased 0.4 per cent from 95,100 to 95,500. Nationally, trend employment figures were up 0.3 per cent. The trend unemployment rate fell to 4.9 per cent in December, down from 5.1 per cent in November, and the number of unemployed people in the Territory fell from 5100 to 5000. The national trend unemployment rate for December was steady at 5.6 per cent.

The latest data suggests that work for Bayu-Undan Stage Two is starting to have a positive impact on official employment figures and while month-to-month figures can be volatile, the signs for the broader employment market are promising.

INDIGENOUS TRAINEES MOVE INTO THE WORKFORCE

Above: YNOTS trainee Amos Marawili.

The YNOTS Indigenous training program has had a successful year, winning five major training awards during 2003 and graduating 15 trainees with nationally-recognised training certificates last week. Thirteen of the 2003 trainees are already in full-time employment.

YNOTS was established by Alcan Gove and YBE in 2001. Since then, 57 trainees have successfully completed the course.

Two of the initial trainees, Michael Marawili and Richard Sagigi, are employed by Alcan Gove as trainers on the program, while another former trainee, Martin Prior, is completing an engineering services traineeship at the Alcan Gove refinery. Other former trainees are working in a variety of areas including YBE, machinery operation, land management, community services and mechanical workshops.

YNOTS’ contribution to Indigenous employment and sustainability has been recognised by several prestigious awards this year including the NT Training Award, while trainer Richard Sagigi won two awards for his individual achievements and contribution.

“It’s gratifying to receive these awards but the real proof of YNOTS’ success is the number of former trainees in the workforce,” said Alcan Gove Site Manager and YNOTS Chairman, Doug Grimmond.

“The fact that 13 of the 2003 participants are currently in full-time jobs is a credit to their own hard work and commitment as well as the support and training they received from YNOTS.

“YNOTS is getting stronger every year and that consistent improvement is due to the great team effort of everyone involved, particularly the YNOTS Administrator Craig Bonney, Richard Sagigi and Michael Marawili, and the support provided by other local businesses,” said Mr Grimmond.

TROPICAL RESORT FOR DARWIN

The Territory Government has called for Expressions of Interest for the development of the Top End’s first international-class tropical resort. As well as being a catalyst for increasing visitor numbers to the Territory and encouraging extended stays in Darwin, Government believes a resort of this kind will boost the local tourism and construction industries and generate further economic spin-offs for a number of local industries.

Guidelines for the resort include a low-rise development incorporating innovative and environmentally sensitive design and features well-suited to the Territory’s unique lifestyle – not a Gold Coast style development. While Government has sites in mind at Lee Point, proponents are invited to nominate any site within the Darwin region they regard as suitable.


THE OFFICE OF TERRITORY DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Territory Development in the Department of the Chief Minister facilitates major project investment in the oil and gas, minerals processing, AustralAsia Trade Route, and innovation sectors as well as coordinating special projects such as the waterfront redevelopment.

For more information on the Office of Territory Development, visit our website at www.otd.nt.gov.au or phone (08) 8946 9555.

To subscribe to this monthly electronic newsletter, e-mail otd.info@nt.gov.au or register online.

www.otd.nt.gov.au