25 July, 2005

100,000th PASSENGER ARRIVES AS ADDITIONAL SERVICES ON THE GHAN PROVE A SUCCESS

The 3-month long expansion of services on the Ghan comes to successful conclusion at the end of July, during which it passed the milestone of 100,000 passengers Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said today.

Great Southern Railway (GSR) the operators of The Ghan increased the number of trains to twice weekly from Adelaide to Darwin (up from one) and three times weekly to Alice Springs (up from two) for the months of May, June and July.

Speaking to media before her meeting with GSR CEO Tony Braxton-Smith this afternoon, Ms Martin said she was pleased the company is currently considering additional services in 2006 and wants to talk to Government about ways they plan to grow total passenger numbers.

“The Ghan has been one of the great success stories in Territory tourism and has brought tens of thousands of tourists and tens of millions of dollars into the Territory,” she said.

“In just over 16 months, more than 100,000 people have travelled through the Territory and helped create new local business and jobs – it’s captured the heart of rail enthusiast across the world.”

Ms Martin said the 100,000th passenger travelled aboard The Ghan in June and GSR expects to carry over 10,000 passengers in a month, for the first time, in July.

She said almost 100 additional passengers travelled on the Ghan in May 2005 (7099) compared to May 2004 (7011). There were over 1,500 more passengers in June 2005 (8275) compared to June 2004 (6673). With more than 10,000 people expected this month, it easily beats the 2004 July figure of 6,800.

“GSR has been very happy with the response to their increased service over the past three-months which is a great result considering the response to a new journey in its inaugural year. The additional services have also meant passengers had a better quality overall experience,” she said.

“While there were more passengers overall, the additional trains meant they didn’t all arrive at the one time which allowed for easier transfers to hotels and tours and a more even spread of customers throughout the week for local business.

The NT Tourism Commission estimates The Ghan is worth approximately $27.7M dollars to the Territory each year. Government spent $8 million building and upgrading Territory passenger terminals.

Another $340,000 will be spent, as part of an election commitment, upgrading the Alice Springs train station. This upgrading is a 50/50 partnership with GSR and is currently in the design stage. Government will spend an additional $400,000 on a “Discovery Walkway” to the centre of Alice Springs.

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