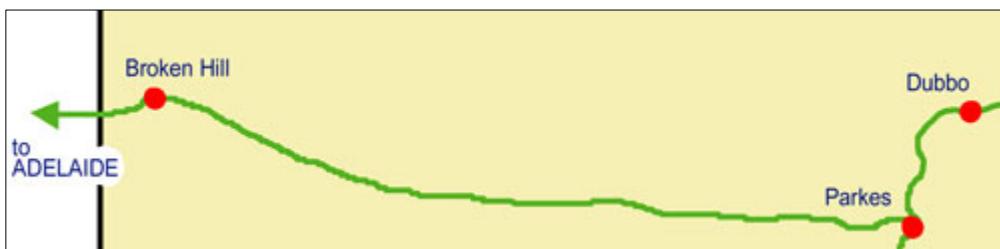




\$21 MILLION FOR THE PARKES-BROKEN HILL LINE

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) will invest \$21 million over the next five years to upgrade the 676 kilometres of track and signalling on the mainline between Parkes and Broken Hill. The Australian and NSW Governments have agreed that ARTC will lease the state's interstate and Hunter Valley rail networks for the next 60 years. The \$21 million investment is part of the \$872 million that ARTC will invest over the next five years as part of the lease arrangements.

The corporation is owned by the Australian Government and the lease means that ARTC will now have the authority to sell track access to train operators over the full length of the interstate mainline from Perth to the Queensland border.



The Parkes to Broken Hill line is single track, with several low structures that restrict the double stacking of containers. The focus of the works will be to improve the line's efficiency and provide increased capacity by enabling it to handle double stacked containers with increased flexibility. As a result, the current constraints on the ability to run 1,800 metre double stacked freight trains all the way from Parkes to Perth will be removed by the end of the 5 year investment programme.

The programme will include:

- \$2 million to raise the height clearance of the Parkes to Broken Hill section of the network;
- \$2.9 million for upgrading communications systems;
- \$1.5 million for strengthening and upgrading steel bridges;
- \$4.1 million to improve ballast material, profiles and drainage; and
- \$3.6 million for rail grinding and straightening of welds to extend asset efficiency and reduce maintenance costs

This investment, together with the extension of the passing loop at Yarrabandai to 1800 metres, will improve the competitiveness of rail so that by 2010 it is expected to carry around 2.4 million tonnes a year between Parkes and Broken Hill.