



## AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

Media Release

### **SUMMER HEAT NO LONGER A BUGBEAR FOR NORTH-SOUTH RAIL CORRIDOR**

Extreme heat conditions no longer hold their sway over rail infrastructure on the majority of the line between Sydney and the Queensland border thanks to the introduction of concrete sleepers, Australian Rail Track Corporation CEO David Marchant announced today.

“As the mercury pushes toward 40 degrees, ARTC would, in the past, often have to implement temporary speed restrictions on numerous sections of the North South corridor particularly in NSW.”

“This was due to the potential for high summer temperatures to cause the steel rail to buckle. In the past ARTC could issue temporary speed restrictions on 50 days every summer which significantly increased transit time between the major capitals.”

“Thanks to the \$400 million project to replace 2.2 million wooden sleepers with concrete sleepers on the North South corridor, temporary speed restrictions due to heat are for the most part a thing of the past,” Mr Marchant said.

“By introducing concrete sleepers, ARTC has significantly increased the track infrastructure strength. The sheer weight of the concrete sleepers holds the track firmly in place and helps prevent heat related buckling.”

“The replacement of concrete sleepers has been completed on the northern line between Sydney and the Queensland border and is well on the way to being completed between Sydney and Melbourne.”

David Marchant said the concrete resleepering showcased the overall upgrade of the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane rail line, which included new passing lanes and loops and signal upgrades.

“Along with the concrete re-sleepering project, the new passing loops, signal upgrades and track and bridge work on the North South corridor ushers in a whole new era of rail between Melbourne and Brisbane,” Mr Marchant said.

“Overall, this upgrade is perhaps the largest rail project since the rail corridor was originally laid,” he said.

“For ARTC it marks rail’s resurgence as a realistic freight option.”

“Once the re-sleepering, additional passing lanes, loops and signalling upgrades are completed, ARTC will be able to offer the freight industry transit times as low as 10

hours 40 minutes between Sydney and Melbourne and 15 hours 35 minutes between Sydney and Brisbane.”

“Rail will be more than competitive again and as each 1500 metre long train can replace 100 semi trailers we could see less trucks on our major roads,” Mr Marchant said.

Mr Marchant said that, overall, nearly 1,500 kilometres of new concrete sleepers would be laid along the main rail line between Melbourne, Sydney and the Queensland border as well as along the main coal export line up the Hunter Valley in New South Wales. The project is scheduled for completion early in 2009.

**Issued: January 23, 2009**

**Contact: Brad Emery 0419 297 004**