



AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRACK CORPORATION LTD

Media Release

New Technology Boosts Ulan Rail Capacity

A \$13.5 million Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) project to bring the Ulan-Muswellbrook rail line out of the 19th and 20th centuries and into 21st century operation is fast approaching completion.

ARTC Chief Executive Officer, David Marchant, said the Ulan Centralised Train Control (CTC) project passed the three quarter completion mark last Friday, with final stage due within eight weeks.

“The Ulan line upgrade is just part of the overall ARTC major improvement of the Hunter Valley coal network,” Mr Marchant said.

“This project means that as new mines on the Ulan coal fields open and existing mines expand, ARTC will have a rail track operating that will more than meet export demands.

“The number of trains running on the Ulan-Muswellbrook line has increased in recent years and future projections are for even more trains.

“The new electronic system will significantly reduce the planned time from mine to port by 30 to 40 minutes,” Mr Marchant said. “This may not sound a lot but in rail operations terms it is a real boost to capacity.”

Until last week, a train taking coal from the Ulan fields to the Port of Newcastle had to stop three times along the 103 kilometre track between Muswellbrook and Coggan Creek.

The stop, Mr Marchant said, could be for about ten minutes and was necessary so that the engine driver could do what train drivers have been doing for generations.

The driver would take a small metal spike out of a simple red painted piece of equipment to ensure that his train, and his alone, was the only one on the next section of track.

“Now the track is electronically monitored on screens by the train controllers at Broadmeadow, as ARTC does for most of the main Hunter Valley coal line and other main line services.

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“We’ve only got another 39 kilometres of track between Coggan Creek and Ulan to convert to centralised control, which will further reduce transit times on this growing section of the coal rail network.

“Since ARTC assumed the lease of the Hunter Valley coal lines from the NSW Government in September 2004, a massive upgrade program swung into action and hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on this vital economic infrastructure.

“Over the next two years, ARTC will spend more than \$100 million a year in further projects as plans are finalised for additional projects costing over half a billion dollars scheduled for the immediate future.

“Working with the coal producers and the rail and port operators, ARTC ensures that the Hunter Valley rail network can meet export capacity,” Mr Marchant said.

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