

Year 3 General Studies

The Overland Telegraph

On 22 August 1872 the construction of the Overland Telegraph line between Adelaide and Darwin was completed. It has been described as ‘the greatest engineering feat carried out in nineteenth century Australia’. Australia’s communication time with Europe was reduced from months to hours. It’s isolation from the rest of the world was lessening.

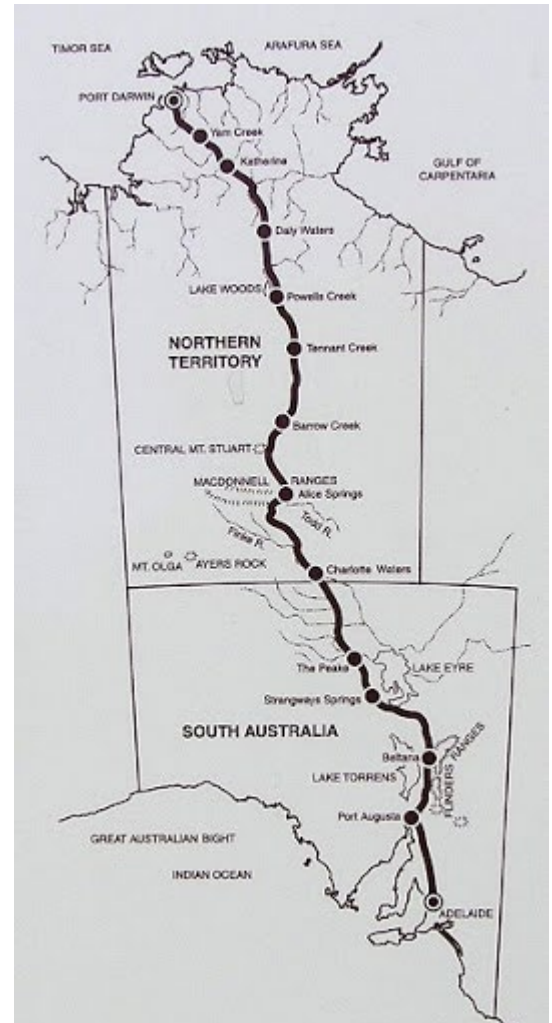
The Overland Telegraph changed the way Australia related to the world and the country’s extreme isolation was broken. Newspapers printed sections by-lined ‘by Electric Telegraph’ and businesses clamoured for news from the European markets. Telegraph offices, especially in rural areas, became centres of trade where information and banking were transacted and orders placed.

The telegraph line also opened up the centre of the continent. Within a year of its construction gold was being mined around Pine Creek (near Katherine) and within 10 years the cattle industry had been established in the Northern Territory. Prospectors and graziers used the repeater stations as centres from which to explore and stake claims on the land. Alice Springs, which was established as a repeater station, became the administrative hub for central Australia.

Did You Know?

Upon completion on 22 August 1872 South Australia’s Superintendent of Telegraphs, Charles Todd was given the honour of sending the first telegraph message along the line:

“We have this day, within two years, completed a line of communications two thousand miles long through the very centre of Australia, until a few years ago a Terra Incognita believed to be a desert.”



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Questions

1. The Overland Telegraph has been described as ‘the greatest engineering feat carried out in nineteenth century Australia’.

True / False

2. How quickly could Australia communicate with Europe after the establishment of the telegraph? (Circle the answer)

hours / days / weeks

3. On the map each of the dots are repeater stations. How many repeater stations were there?

4. How did the Overland Telegraph remove Australia from isolation?

5. The telegraph line opened up the centre of the continent.

True / False

6. When and who sent the first telegraph message along the line?
