Chief Minister Clare Martin today announced she would establish a business round-table to ensure her government and the Territory’s business community maintains a regular and productive dialogue.

In her first major address to the peak industry bodies, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Territory Construction Association and the Motor Trades Association, Ms Martin announced the round table as a means to ensuring a two-way dialogue between the government and private enterprise.

"My government is the first to acknowledge the vital role business plays in the economy of the Northern Territory," Ms Martin said.

"This mechanism is designed to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

"I want to make sure I am talking not only to the peak industry bodies, but to individual business men and women as well.

"All tiers of business will be represented, from the smallest enterprises employing a handful of people, to our largest corporations which employ thousands.

"We need to be talking and we need to be finding solutions together."

Ms Martin said her work in getting Virgin Blue Airlines to the Territory in her first week in government, combined with the announcement of a start date for the $10 million tank farm redevelopment, were positive examples of Labor’s business-friendly approach.

She used her lunch speech to put firmly on record Labor’s unequivocal commitment to two of the Territory’s major infrastructure initiatives.

"I want to make it clear that my government supports the rail project.

"My support for rail is a given … our priority now is to make sure we maximise the benefits for Territory business and job creation.

She also continued the push to see the gas project through to fruition.

"Negotiations have to stop taking place in the public domain," Ms Martin said.

"I will not play politics with gas.

"But I can give everyone the commitment that behind the scenes, we are doing whatever we can to help get gas over the line, but the government is only one player.

"It’s a complex issue, encompassing a range of stakeholders, from multi-national corporations to the world’s newest government in East Timor, to Australia’s newest government right here in the Territory.

"This is an incredibly important project to the Territory and we are doing everything we can to make sure that we fulfil our obligations.

Ms Martin said business would see a difference between her style of government and
her predecessors.

"Make no mistake, you can all expect a level playing field," she said.