Chief Minister Clare Martin has begun her six-day Asian business trip, meeting with management of the world-famous Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) this afternoon.

"The HKCEC is one of the largest of its kind in Asia and is a truly magnificent facility," she said.

"It stands as a firm example of the benefits a convention/entertainment facility can deliver to a city, with tens-of-thousands of people arriving in Hong Kong each year to attend events.

"Our discussions, and tour of the facility, are timely with the Government’s feasibility study into a Darwin Convention Centre due to be released next month."

Ms Martin said that Government was keen to learn from successful operations - having previously met with Adelaide Convention Centre management - and today discussed a number of issues including:

- The mix of convention centre space v conference space.
- Benefits of being a waterfront location.
- International v national market focus.
- Ongoing and establishment costs to Government.
- Links to broader industry, such as hotels.
- Marketing efforts.
- Partnership agreements

"The lucrative business market is extremely valuable to the Territory, already injecting millions of dollars into our economy and creating hundreds of jobs, and an effective convention centre would add to this greatly," Ms Martin said.

"We believe business tourism is an area that can be grown with assistance from Government, and this is something we are currently exploring.

"With airline travel expected to pick-up in the near future after a volatile year, and the Territory developing as Australia’s newest gas hub, there is an opportunity to establish our major cities as business destinations."

The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre is one of the largest in Asia and includes five exhibition halls (46,600sqm), two convention halls (6,100sqm, total seating 6,100) and two theatres (800 sqm, total seating 1,000). Other facilities include 52 meeting rooms (6,900 sqm), pre-function or ‘break out’ areas (8,000 sqm) and seven restaurants.

The column-free Grand hall seats 4,300 people for large-scale conferences and 3,000 for formal dinners, making it one of the largest such venues in the world.

The centre was first opened in 1988 and is owned by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council – a statutory organisation for promoting external trade.

Ms Martin will meet with Cathay Pacific and address the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce and Industry tomorrow.