Chief Minister Clare Martin today said the government would give urgent priority to developing a world class waterside and wharf precinct in Darwin.

"This was one of the key recommendations arising from the recent Economic Development Summit, and I believe it's an opportunity we must explore," Ms Martin said.

Ms Martin said business, community groups and the public would be widely consulted before a decision is made on any future precinct.

"The wharf is one of our most valuable assets. I want to ensure its development is in-line with community and business needs, and becomes a defining signature for Darwin," she said.

"My government is committed to assisting growth in tourism, and other business sectors, and providing an attractive entertainment area for locals to enjoy – this project could do just that."

The Chief Minister said a plan for the wharf (outlined in the 1999 document Central Darwin Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives) would be taken back to the public for comment.

"Previously, the development of a wharf precinct was identified as one part of an overall project – we plan to give the wharf our full attention," Ms Martin said.

"Information has been sent out today to business and community groups, and a display site has been set-up.

"We’ve written to many interested stakeholders in an effort to gather as many opinions as possible before deciding what style of precinct and what type of facilities people want."

Ms Martin said the current design (that is being released for public consultation) involves a mixture of low-rise residential and commercial property.

"One certainty is that an up-dated wharf precinct plan will incorporate, and build-on, the many attractions that already exist in the area – including the docking of navy and cruise ships," she said.

"Money will been allocated in next year’s budget to fund design and early earth-works.

"We will make this happen."

Public consultation will continue until 1 March next year – work on the precinct likely to begin late 2002.