Chief Minister, Clare Martin, today displayed the first photos of drilling at the Bayu-Undan gas field in the Timor Sea, showing that work had commenced on the project that will lead to the eventual construction of an LNG plant at Darwin.

"There will be 1000 to 1500 jobs created during the construction phase of the LNG project that is planned to begin next year," Ms Martin said.

"When the project is up and running, there will be 100 full-time jobs in Darwin associated with the project.

"Territorians should be pleased to see the employment opportunities both here and in East Timor coming from this massive project.

"Costing US $1.9 billion, the Gas Recycle Project that has just begun in the Timor Sea is Phase One of the Bayu-Undan development.

"This stage involves the condensate, propane and butane being brought to the surface and shipped away for sale. As well, gas from the site will be re-injected into the reservoir until it can be piped onshore for the Darwin LNG Project."

Ms Martin said the Bayu-Undan field contained estimated reserves of 400 million barrels of condensate and liquefied petroleum gas and 3.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

"Full production at the Bayu-Undan Gas Recycle Project is expected to begin in early 2004.

"The Territory Government is working hard to ensure that gas is processed at a planned multi-billion LNG Plant onshore in Darwin.

"While that has not yet been finalised, board approvals from co-venturer companies are expected in the near future and it is Government's focus to secure that gas and with it thousand of jobs and billions of dollars of investment."