Chief Minister, Clare Martin, today welcomed the positive reaction of Territorians to yesterday’s announcement that Government would begin working with the community on a new campaign to achieve Statehood, based on a Territory Constitution we develop ourselves.

Ms Martin made the announcement at the inaugural Charles Darwin University Symposium.

"This time we will do it properly with careful community consultation and community involvement from the start – this time we will get it right," she said.

"I have pledged that a majority of delegates to any future Constitutional Convention are elected by Territorians and that Indigenous communities or representatives be centrally involved at all stages."

The Chief Minister said that the next step is for the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs - made up of Government, Opposition and Independent members - to meet in coming weeks to decide how to progress Statehood and involve the community.

"They will begin work on drafting a community-based plan for how best to move towards Statehood for all Territorians," she said.

The path towards Statehood will follow these values:

- It will be community-based, not imposed upon the people
- The Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs will facilitate and provide resources to this community-based process.
- We will aim for a five-year timetable, including the drafting of a new Constitution, its examination by an elected Constitutional Convention, and an eventual vote by all Territorians. This timeline will be designed for maximum flexibility to fit in with community wishes.

Ms Martin said that while Statehood was previously rejected by Territorians in 1998, she believed that, with the Territory set to celebrate its 25th Anniversary of Self-Government, there would be strong support for a new community-based campaign.

"Our aim would be to put a Statehood proposition to the people of the Territory in time to coincide with the 30th anniversary of self-government, July 1 2008," she said.

"By the age of 30-years, the Territory democracy can truly be seen as coming of age but if the community wants us to take longer, or less time, to draft a new constitution with its many important constitutional, political and social issues, so be it.

"The Territory is often the focus of national attention, and yet we still don’t enjoy many of the political rights of other Australians - legislation passed by our Legislative Assembly, set up by the Commonwealth Self-Government Act of 1978, may be overturned by the Federal Parliament, as has occurred before.

"We have only two Senators representing this very large geographic area, and we are soon to have our House of Representatives seats cut back to one,
following a disputed population calculation.

"While Territorians votes count in the overall tally in a national referendum, we’re not counted for in the second criterion of successful referenda: that they must pass in a majority of States.

"For Territorians with a history of fighting for true national representation these are real concerns."

Ms Martin said she has discussed the issue with the Prime Minister and he has agreed to support the new campaign for Statehood.

"The many complex details about Statehood will be discussed and worked through in a sensible manner and education will play a key role," she said.

"The road to statehood has not been a smooth one: we are well acquainted with the difficulties and have learned from the mistakes of the past."