Government push to secure Territory jobs at Wickham Point LNG plant gains momentum

Following the East Timorese Parliament’s ratification of the Timor Sea Treaty yesterday, the Territory Government’s push to secure construction jobs for Territorians on the proposed Wickham Point LNG plant has gained momentum.

Chief Minister Clare Martin met with Bechtel – the company selected by ConocoPhillips to build its $1.8 billion plant – in Houston, Texas today.

"Bechtel is one of the world’s largest engineering companies, with more than 30,000 employees world-wide, and is expected to employ between 1200 and 1500 workers during the peak of its three-year construction phase at Wickham Point," Ms Martin said.

"The Territory will have a base of skilled workers available as construction on the railway starts to wind down and we welcome Bechtel’s commitment to work with us to identify any skills shortages and develop training and information workshops for local businesses."

"The Government wants as many Territorians as possible to be employed on this huge project, which is bigger than the Alice to Darwin railway project, and will work closely with Bechtel to achieve this."

During today’s meeting, Bechtel also confirmed with the Chief Minister that they would be opening a Darwin office next year.

"Bechtel expects a number of major gas-related projects to follow the Wickham Point Plant and has announced plans to establish a greater presence in Darwin."

Ms Martin said that Bechtel had a good record in Australia of employment and training and previously favoured local hiring and workforce training at its Gladstone and Port Augusta construction sites.

"The Wickham Point project will deliver skilled jobs and lucrative contracts for a number of years (the plant is expected to be completed early 2006) and we are determined to help secure as many jobs as possible for Territorians and Territory business," she said.

The Chief Minister also outlined the Territory Government’s determination to see strong local employment content when she met ConocoPhillips CEO, Jim Mulva, in London earlier this week.

"These meetings have cemented relationships and built on the work already undertaken by Government with the developer and the building company, to attract a high percentage of jobs."

"The Territory Government has shown its support to these international
companies by spending $20 million to build a road to Wickham Point to service the plant and now we want to work with them to secure the maximum economic benefits for locals.

"This process can also be assisted by working with the land councils to attract skilled indigenous workers."