Renowned international airline carrier, Cathay Pacific Airlines, has agreed to undertake a joint study with the Territory Government into the feasibility of commencing flights into the region.

The important agreement was reached during a morning meeting between the Chief Minister and David Turnbull, the airline’s Chief Executive and Deputy Chairman.

"I am delighted that the Government has secured this agreement and we will now be doing the hard work to build a successful business case," Ms Martin said.

"This meeting was an opportunity to detail the growth expected in the Northern Territory - with the railway and gas related projects now secured - and establish a closer relationship with the company.

"Whilst making no firm commitment at this stage, Cathay Pacific is interested in our potential for growth and is aware of our plans to aggressively pursue internationals carriers to the region."

Ms Martin said that the meeting was the first of a number of talks she would hold with airlines, including Malaysia Airlines, during her Asia business trip.

"Cathay Pacific is a high-quality airline with a large fleet, however it has never flown to the Territory and we believe there is an opportunity for them to capture what will be an expanding market," she said.

"Establishing this Hong Kong–Darwin link would open a new northern gateway route, greatly assisting the local tourism industry by connecting us to the wider Asian and European markets.

"With a world-wide down turn in tourism and the reduction in international flights to Darwin, the Government considers attracting new carriers and air-links to be high priority."

Ms Martin said that a new Hong Kong–Darwin service would complement existing airline links.

"Our Airline Development Executive, Peter Roberts, will continue working with the world’s airlines to establish business plans that attract more flights and more tourists back to the Territory – today’s meeting with Cathay pacific was a good step in that direction," she said.

Work on the feasibility study will be undertaken over the next few months.