Labour force figures

Job creation and halting the rising level of unemployment in the Territory remain the highest priority of the new Labor Government.

Chief Minister Clare Martin today said labour force figures over the past year had showed a mixed result in the Territory.

"The unemployment rate has increased in the past 12 months quite dramatically, reaching 8.4 per cent in December," she said.

"However, employment growth in the Territory was the strongest of any state or territory in the year to December.

"When we came into office last August, the jobless rate had been increasing significantly in the Territory for the previous 12 months as more people were looking for work.

"The Ansett collapse and the events of September 11 did not help matters.

"So we inherited a worsening problem and set about halting it. This will not happen overnight and while it is a significant challenge we have inherited, it is one that we will not shirk.

"The government recognises that many people are hurting and it is our job to attract new job-creating investments to the Territory and ensure that major projects under way, such as the Railway, continue to bring positive effects to the local economy."

Ms Martin said that barring further international unrest or a worsening of the global economy, the government expected a turnaround in the jobs situation over the next 12 months.

"There are a number of projects under way, or in the pipeline, that make the Territory's prospects in the short to medium term look positive.

"And a positive announcement on Timor Sea gas development would increase business and community confidence and lead to further job creation.

"The government is working extremely hard to turn the economic situation it inherited around and I am confident that evidence of our success will become clearer over the next 12 to 18 months."