23 June 2003

Work begins at Wickham Point

Construction of the long awaited $1.6 billion dollar Darwin LNG Plant gets underway at Wickham Point today.

Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said that employee orientation courses - focusing on work place safety, job expectation and environmental requirements - were conducted at the Bechtel office this morning in readiness for site clearing this afternoon.

"This is the culmination of hard work by Governments, business and Territorians and marks a turning point in the Territory’s economic history," she said.

"The site clearing work is the beginning of the 3-year construction phase for the ConocoPhillips LNG Plant - part of the overall $3 billion Bayu-Undan development."

Ms Martin said that Bechtel, the company employed to build the plant, had moved quickly after the announcement that the Bayu-Undan project would proceed.

"More than 1000 jobs will be created during construction which will be made up of a mix of local and interstate workers," she said.

"Territorians will be able to access high pay, high skill jobs and big contracts already let to Territory companies."

The Chief Minister said that Thiess Ptd Ltd - with 40 years civil works experience in NT including Stage 2 of the East Arm Port – had been awarded a number of contracts worth over $150 million.

"This company has won contracts to provide site clearance (starting today), tank infrastructure and the new wharf," she said.

"This work alone will involve staffing of more than 200 employees and I have been impressed that Thiess are committed to getting on with work and providing jobs for Territorians."

Site clearing will continue for 2 – 3 weeks after which excavation and grading work will begin with the project done in set stages.

Ms Martin said that a number of contracts have now been awarded and that others have been bid on and are being evaluated.

"Also, new opportunities will continue to emerge for business and Territorians as contracts continue to be let - this project has a 32 month construction cycle so new opportunities will be happening on almost a monthly basis.

"I again encourage anyone seeking employment to register at the Bechtel recruitment centre."