Chief Minister Clare Martin today held high level talks with Federal Resources Minister Ian Macfarlane to stress the Territory and National benefits of attracting Timor Sea Gas on-shore to Darwin.

In Canberra for the annual Treasurers’ Ministerial Council, Ms Martin said the Territory Government would take every opportunity to encourage greater Federal involvement in attracting the valuable gas resource in the national interest.

"Phillips Petroleum recently signed two new international customers to its Bayu-Undan field and spoke of its plan to build a pipeline and LNG plant in Darwin," she said.

"However, for that to proceed, it needs the Australia/East Timor Treaty ratified by the Federal Government before East Timor gains full independence on May 20.

"With $3 billion of investment in the project hanging in the balance, the Territory Government today strongly stressed the need to fast track that process.

"Phillips’ planned Bayu-Undan project would be the biggest infrastructure project in Territory history – with Federal Government support that could soon become a reality."

Ms Martin said the Territory Government also sought Federal support to convince the Sunrise joint-venture to pipe gas from its Sunrise field to Darwin, rather than to a floating gas plant.

"A Territory Government commissioned report has been provided to the Federal Government detailing the substantial benefits to Australia from on-shore gas and calling for its support to strongly encourage the project to be based on-shore.

"Through Invest Australia, and other business avenues, the Federal Government carries enormous sway and will play a huge role in determining whether we receive the full benefits of gas opportunities."

Ms Martin will hold further meetings with Federal Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer and Treasurer Peter Costello this afternoon.