Sunrise development inches closer but more to be done

25 March 2004

The Leader of the Opposition, Terry Mills, today welcomed today's anticipated passage of legislation through the Federal Parliament that will bring the development of the Greater Sunrise gas field in the Timor Sea a little closer.

However, Mr Mills warned, there is much more work to be done to bring the dream of onshore gas in Darwin to reality, and that it is time that the Chief Minister stood up and started to lead the Northern Territory.

'Today's federal legislation clears the way from Australia 's perspective, but this is just the start. The companies involved must be convinced to bring the gas onshore and Timor Leste must agree to the sea boundaries and revenue arrangements.'

'The Country Liberal Party has a proud history of contributing to the development of the Territory, initiating projects such as the railway, the wharf redevelopment and the current oil and gas plant at Wickham Point.

'The Chief Minister has tried to claim credit for all of these developments, but now is the time to see if she really has what it takes.

'Mrs Martin must start playing in the 'big league' and engage in dialogue with the Oil and Gas companies that will decide the future of this project.

Reports in today's Financial Review that the Timor Leste Prime Minister Dr Mari Alkatiri has serious issues with the current international sea boundaries surrounding the Greater Sunrise field and is considering walking away from the deal is also a major worry for the Territory.

'Will the Martin Government use its relationship with Dr Alkatiri and Timor Leste to help broker and outcome to this impasse?'

'As Chief Minister in a future CLP Government, I would be using the strong ties that exist between the Northern Territory and Timor Leste to see that an agreement can be reached. Likewise, I would be holding urgent talks with representatives of joint venturers to ensure that idea of Greater Sunrise gas coming onshore to Darwin remains in their thinking.'

'The Chief Minister has not been on top of today's announcement and should have already had these processes in motion.

Ends