Chief Minister Clare Martin today announced plans to revitalise part of Darwin’s foreshore with the incorporation of a world-class convention centre in the proposed $600 million redevelopment of the old wharf precinct.

Ms Martin said the project – to be known as Darwin City Waterfront – would involve a Government commitment of $100 million, with siteworks to start almost immediately and construction to begin within 18 months.

The Government's $100 million commitment will go towards building the convention centre and some other infrastructure costs such as headworks, land improvement, remediation of contaminated areas, coastal protection and readying the entire site for development.

The project will cover a 25-hectare site already zoned in the Central Business District (CBD) and will include mixed-use development with residential, commercial and recreational use plus a convention centre.

It will provide new linkages to the rest of the CBD and would be the largest of its kind ever undertaken in the Territory – all part of the Government’s commitment to building Australia’s new frontier.

It will generate hundreds of construction, tourism and retail jobs, and provide a massive boost to the local economy.

It also will transform a declining industrial area into a bustling foreshore that would bring life back into this important and historic part of Darwin.

"This exciting new project will reshape how Darwin connects with Darwin Harbour and to reconnect the community to the birthplace of this great city," said Ms Martin.

"We will deliver a world-class waterfront development that also says every step of the way that it is Darwin, Northern Territory – a place of great contrasts, but also one with enormous opportunity and with a future few can match."

"The Government is committed to building the future of the Territory. This $600m project will redefine one of the most significant places that we have as we reclaim the waterfront space next to the wharves for the people of the Territory, their families and our guests." 

Ms Martin said the foundation project for Darwin City Waterfront would be the new Darwin Convention and Exhibition Centre (DCEC), a multi-purpose facility designed to attract further business tourism to the Top End.

The site was the preferred location of PriceWaterhouseCoopers report to Government. The report identified the wharf precinct as the most appropriate site based on numerous criteria, including site capacity,
proximity to the CBD, marketability and location.

The Chief Minister said the DCEC would complement the Alice Springs facility and establish the Northern Territory as a quality destination for a wide range of events, both nationally and internationally.

It will have the capacity to seat 1500 people and provide 4000 square metres of exhibition space and parking.

"The convention centre will be the magnet that puts tens of thousands of people on planes into this city, as well as in beds in our hotels and at the tables of our local restaurants," Ms Martin said.

"You can only do that if we have an internationally competitive product, and without question, Darwin City Waterfront is a premier location for the DCEC."

The Chief Minister said the waterfront project offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform an eyesore into a landmark attraction.

"We want to get rid of the old sheds and tanks, the broken concrete, disused buildings and old storage areas. A prime piece of foreshore, that could be a community asset, is largely inaccessible at present."

**Key Elements of the Waterfront Development**

- Development of a world-class convention and exhibition centre that will draw people into the city and provide an integrated facility for local use;

- The convention centre will be just below the escarpment, connected by a walkway that provides an easy 10-minute stroll past the town hall ruins and Brown's Mart to the Smith St Mall;

- The convention centre to be sited alongside complementary hotel or serviced apartment accommodation, and related commercial and entertainment facilities.

- A development that preserves the escarpment and is in accord with a masterplan that preserves the unique tropical flavour of Darwin;

- A two-kilometre promenade around a revitalised foreshore, so families can enjoy the reclaimed industrial site;

- Preservation of our unique heritage, including World War Two sites, acknowledgement of the Larrakia people's ownership of the land, and the early days of Darwin's settlement;

- Activities including commercial development, plenty of public open space, and continued maritime activities;

- Residential development within the 25-hectare site (where the iron ore wharf and fuel tanks are now) that reflects the area’s unique qualities and location.

Ms Martin said the Government was well aware of the attachment the people of Darwin have to parts of this area, particularly the wharves where they go fishing or to eat.
"That is why the views and concerns of the local community will have a significant impact on the final design, particularly in the area of public access, open space and preserving historical sites.

"The Government is committed to close consultation with the Darwin community to create a vibrant meeting place for locals and visitors alike that complements the remainder of the CBD."

As announced in the 2003-04 budget, the Government has set aside $3 million for preliminary work on the convention centre proposal and $1 million for preliminary work on the Darwin Waterfront Redevelopment.

Ms Martin said that with Government support for the convention centre being merged with the waterfront redevelopment and the land already zoned CBD, the next steps would include:

- The immediate start of an environmental assessment of the project. Tenders have already been called and the process will take place over a 12-month period.

- The Government to seek expressions of interest from the private sector to join with the Government in an integrated development of the 25-hectare site, including the convention centre.

- Siteworks to begin almost immediately, including the removal of container sheds.

- The development of a plan to ensure ongoing community consultation.

- Working with the Darwin City Council to guarantee the future of the Darwin Entertainment Centre and ensure the waterfront redevelopment complements the remainder of the Darwin CBD.

Ms Martin said the Government strongly believed the full potential of the redevelopment would only be achieved with the development expertise of the private sector and supported a single developer driving the integrated project.

The Government and the preferred developer would work with the community to develop a Master Plan for the waterfront.

It is expected that the entire Darwin City Waterfront redevelopment would take up to 15 years to complete.

A website has been developed to keep people informed on the redevelopment project. Fact sheets, maps and media releases are available on [http://www.waterfront.nt.gov.au](http://www.waterfront.nt.gov.au).

For further information, contact Craig Rowston on 0401 119777.