The Government today detailed the timeframe for its ambitious plan to have construction of the Darwin convention centre begin in 18 months time and a new waterfront within 15 years.

Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said that Government wanted to ensure Territorians interests were met and that the benefits went to locals.

"This is a bold and visionary project for the Territory and the Government has allocated $100 million towards the development," she said.

"A Project Manager will be appointed shortly, supported by a project team of specialists such as lawyers, financial advisers, urban planners, engineers and marketing staff - this team will be overseen by the Government’s Major Projects Group.

"Importantly, we will also appoint a Probity Auditor to oversee the process and provide an independent assessment that the selection process is conducted fairly and equitably."

Ms Martin said that the waterfront project would proceed as a public/private partnership where appropriate and that this process would be undertaken in three stages:

**Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest**

National advertisements will be placed in early September 2003 calling for expressions of interest to develop the waterfront site - including a convention and exhibition Centre - as a build, own, operate and transfer back to the taxpayers after 25 years.

Interested consortia of developers, financiers and operators must submit a preliminary concept plan including: how they would develop the area, details of their technical and management abilities, financial resources, and experience in projects of this magnitude.

Bidders will also have to outline the composition of the consortium team (including the inclusion of local companies), provide capability statements, outline project economics, provide a preliminary concept, and outline their project delivery strategy.

Expressions of Interest will be evaluated and short-listed by December 2003.

**Stage 2 – Detailed Bid Phase**

It is expected that three consortia will be invited to proceed to the detailed bid phase between January 2004 to April 2004.

Detailed bids will have to outline how they will implement the vision for the site, develop and operate the convention and exhibition centre and detail the extent of contribution they expect from Government towards the construction and operation of the convention and exhibition centre, and head works for the site.

Detailed bids will also have to include a Local Industry Participation Plan, as required by the Northern Territory Government’s Industry Participation Plan Policy.
In addition to detailing government contributions towards siteworks and headworks, they must include the return to the Government from revenue from the sale of land and property.

This is the stage when bidders will undertake and submit details of their development plans and proposed facilities, traffic analysis and design, preliminary designs for the convention centre and design for required engineering services, in support of their bids.

A decision on a preferred bid is expected by June 2004.

**Stage 3 – Negotiations with Preferred Bidder**

Negotiations with the preferred consortia leading to a Project Development Agreement (PDA) are expected to be completed by the end of 2004.

In conjunction with this process there will be a public consultation period leading to a final agreed Masterplan for the area.

Ms Martin said that this would be an important part of the PDA.

The Project Development Agreement will outline the responsibilities and risks for the Government and developer, and will detail the timing of both contributions from the Government and revenue returns to Government during the life of the project.

The Project Development Agreement will set the milestones that the developers must meet in developing the site over 10 to 15 years.

"As we outlined in Parliament today, this will be a very open process and will result in long term benefits for Territorians," Ms Martin said.

"We have a detailed plan and it revolves around growing the economy and delivering maximum benefits to Territory business."