Construction of an LNG Plant now underway at Wickham Point will mean more jobs for Territorians, Employment, Education and Training Minister Syd Stirling said today.

Mr Stirling said work on the plant would provide a boost to disappointing ABS jobs figures released today for the month of June.

"These figures are of course volatile and subject to revisions – ABS has already revised down the Territory’s jobless rate for the month of May by 0.1%,” Mr Stirling said.

"ANZ job ads also released today for the month of June show an increase of 2.3%, following a more than 18% rise in May, which is a positive sign for future employment in the Territory.

"There is no doubt that the Territory economy – particularly the business and tourism sectors – have faced a number of difficulties over the past few years, following September 11, the Bali bombing and the more recent SARS outbreak, but these incidents are thankfully behind us now.

"It was also expected that there would a drop off in employment as the railway neared completion.

"But, we are on the brink of some exciting major developments here in the Territory.

"On top of Wickham Point, Government has a number of major projects in the pipeline, including the wharf precinct development and construction of a Convention Centre in Darwin, which will mean more jobs for Territorians and a better economic climate for business.

"Government has also reduced the financial load on businesses by cutting payroll tax, dropping the Temporary Budget Improvement Levy 18 months earlier than planned, increasing the exemption threshold on hiring duty and introducing new exemptions on franchises and leases.

"Government is also continuing its record $900 million spend on capital works over two years."

Mr Stirling said a recent Access Economics report forecast that the Territory had the best economic outlook of any Australian jurisdiction for the next few years.

"The report also predicts that we will see jobs growth of 1.6% in the Territory in 2003-04, above the national average of 1.4%, and that there is good news ahead for both our housing and tourism sectors.

"While the Territory economy has clearly felt the effects of world events over the past few years, the signs are positive for an economic turn around in the near future."