Chief Minister Clare Martin today told the Northern Territory Minerals Council that her new Labor Government would maximize benefits to the Territory from development of its petroleum, gas and mineral resources.

Ms Martin said the mining industry was the single most significant contributor to the Territory’s Gross State Product and would continue to drive regional growth and employment.

"For the mining industry to continue its high level of contribution to the Territory economy, new mines must be found and developed to replace those that have gone off stream in recent years," she said.

"My Government will move quickly to fast track outstanding and new exploration applications.

"Limited access to land has, for many years, been the major impediment to exploration and mining in the Territory.

"The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and the Native Title Act have previously provided the basis for past Northern Territory Governments to fall into an antagonistic relationship with Land Councils in the Northern Territory, but those days are over."

Ms Martin said the Labor Government would deal openly and honestly with Aboriginal Territorians and their organisations.

"We will promote consultation and consideration on issues affecting the wider community including Aboriginal land rights, sacred sites and economic development issues," she said.

In a wide-ranging address, Ms Martin also reiterated the Labor Government’s determination to bring gas onshore.

"The combination of a world class gas province and increasing national and international demand for energy and gas related products makes this inevitable," she said.

"The only issue is timing.

"Achieving agreement for offshore developments and producing liquid natural gas and methanol onshore is one of the government’s highest priorities in the short term."

Ms Martin, who is visiting East Timor this Saturday for the historic swearing-in of that country’s new government, said she would maintain productive ties with the new administration in East Timor to facilitate all potential mutual business and industry developments.

"My Government will bring the Northern Territory forward quickly by developing strategic relationships with our trading and business partners," she said.

"We are committed to creating new jobs and industries in the Territory, by adopting a progressive and consultative approach to the way we do business."