BHP Billiton is today celebrating 50 years of mining manganese on Groote Eylandt.

Minister for Mines and Energy, Willem Westra van Holthe, and local Member for Arnhem, Larisa Lee, met with representatives from BHP Billiton, the Arnindilyakwa Land Council, the local community and mine employees.

“Today is a very special occasion for the local community, GEMCO (Groote Eylandt Manganese Company) and the whole of the Territory,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“During the past 50 years GEMCO has exported more than 80 million tonnes of manganese ore.

“Over the past five years GEMCO has invested approximately $462 million in to expansion and today we are also celebrating the completion of Stage Two of the Groote Eylandt Expansion Project.”

Ms Lee said the Country Liberals Government supported building our regions through the growth of existing industries and encouraging new investments.

“As the local Member for Arnhem, it is good to see GEMCO continue to grow in a sustainable and competitive manner,” Ms Lee said.

“GEMCO currently employ 63 indigenous people, including 47 from the local community.

“The people of Groote Eylandt continue to benefit from GEMCO’s presence. With economic development comes an increase in jobs, training and services.”

At the official ceremony Mr Westra van Holthe unveiled a plaque commemorating the event.

BHP Billiton’s Australian manganese business is the largest seaborne producer of manganese ore in the world, exporting to markets in China, India, Korea, Japan and Europe.

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