The Territory’s biggest new mine for 20 years was officially opened today firmly establishing the Roper Region as a lucrative new iron ore mining province.

“It’s a major milestone for Western Desert Resources and the Territory economy. The Roper Bar Mine expected to produce up to three million tonnes of iron ore per year for the next eight to 12 years,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

The mine is located in the Territory’s Gulf Country, 100 kilometres southeast of Ngukurr or 200 kilometres east of Mataranka.

Mr Giles and Mines Minister Willem Westra van Holthe both travelled to the Gulf Country today for the mine’s official opening. The first shipment of ‘Roper Red’ will be exported through the Port of Bing Bong later this week.

“The company is leading the way in its commitment to the Territory by deciding to move its head office to Darwin,” Mr Giles said.

“It is now the Territory’s largest independently owned company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange with an estimated market value of about $350 million (AUD).

“It’s been amazing to see this mine come online so quickly. Development only started about 12 months ago and Western Desert Resources has done an incredible job getting this project moving.”

At the peak of construction, 500 people including 100 Traditional Owners were employed on the project. Now the mine is operating, a total of 290 people will be employed at the site, the loading facility and the company’s Darwin head office. About 50 of these employees are Indigenous.

“The company has spent $180 million on major infrastructure to make the project a reality. This included building a 165 km haul road with ten new bridges to bring ore from the mine site to Bing Bong Port,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“The company expects to transport about 11,000 tonnes of ore from the mine to the Port every day, delivering an annual turnover of up to $450 million (AUD) per year.

“Only 20 per cent of the whole area has been explored and Western Desert Resources believes there could be up to two billion tonnes of ore in the province.

“The company is so confident of the province’s potential that it is already working on plans for the development of stage 2 of the project.”

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