More than three times the number of mineral Exploration Licences have been granted by the Martin Government in two and a half years than under the former CLP Government in the preceding three years.

The Martin Government this week is celebrating the granting of the 700th Exploration Licence since it came to power.

In the three years before the August 2001 election, just 201 Exploration Licences were granted by the former CLP Government.

Mines and Energy Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said it was through the Government’s commitment to negotiate, not litigate, that the Territory’s mining industry was moving ahead.

“With the milestone reached this week, a total of 700 Exploration Licences have been granted in the Territory under the Martin Government since August 2001,” he said.

“Around $26.5 million will be pumped into our economy by the companies granted these licences, not to mention the generation of many jobs for Territorians.

“This Government wants to facilitate exploration in the Territory, which is why we are working to develop solid working relationships with industry and land councils.

“Recognising native title, the Government has developed specific conditions of grant to protect the rights and interests of traditional native title landholders and ensure appropriate consultation.”

Mr Vatskalis said in the three years prior to the August 2001 election, just 201 Exploration Licences were granted under the former CLP Government.

“Compare this with the 700 Exploration Licences we’ve granted in less than three years. The results speak for themselves,” he said.

The Minister said his Department is working with the Land Councils to convene a workshop titled “New Perspectives” to be held in Alice Springs on 24 March 2004.

The workshop is aimed at increasing the understanding of the issues involved with exploration and mining on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

“It is through such initiatives we are moving the Territory ahead, and encouraging others to share the exciting opportunities on offer.”