The Territory Government has reached another exploration milestone with the granting of the 600th exploration licence since coming to office, Resource Development Minister Paul Henderson told Parliament today.

"Since coming to office two years ago, the Martin Government has opened up 376,000 square kilometres for mineral exploration," Mr Henderson said.

"The majority of the 600 exploration licences have been granted under the Native Title Act, and I am pleased to report the Native Title Tribunal acknowledges the NT's procedures under this Act as amongst the most progressive and successful in the nation."

The 600th licence was granted to Giants Reef Mining.

"To place this achievement in context, the previous CLP Government granted only 234 exploration licences during its last four years in office – an average of 59 per year," said Mr Henderson.

"In contrast, the Martin Government has granted 600 exploration licences in the last two years – 600 of the 746 exploration licences current in the Northern Territory."

The mining industry is the largest contributor to the Territory's Gross State Product – 22% of the total GSP in 2000/01 – and mineral production and processing in 2002/03 was valued at $1.4 billion.

The 600 exploration licences granted since the Martin Government came to power two years ago have a combined first year spend of $23.7 million.

"The mining industry provides thousands of direct and indirect jobs for Territorians, and the Government will continue to work with the industry and its stakeholders to maintain its very important role in our economy."